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# TRAVELS WITHOUT A COMPASS

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TRAVELS WITHOUT BAEDEKER

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TRAVELS WITHOUT  
**BAEDEKER**  
BY ARDERN BEAMAN

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TO  
C. AND I. VON BÜLOW  
BETTER KNOWN AS  
THE  
"GRANDPARENTS"



## PREFACE

**I**N these wanderings I visited no places that many have not already visited before, and my only apology for publishing an account of them is that parts of the journey were made in somewhat unusual ways—owing more to the exigencies of the privy purse than to personal inclination; and also because every man views the same object from a different angle.

So I ventured to perpetrate this book in the hope that the experiences of one who delights in new places and new things, but above all likes men and loves women, may be of interest enough to tempt some of the improvident into buying it.

It claims no literary merit, nor any sort of accuracy, historical or otherwise, being simply an impressionist sketch of places and people as seen by the writer, whose trade is not the pen—perhaps for him a fortunate circumstance.

Much space is necessarily devoted to trains

## Preface

and cabins, almost recalling at times to the writer's anxious mind the "damnable iteration" of Xenophon's so many stages and parasangs to the next populous and flourishing city. But after all trains and cabins form the greatest factor of travel, and it is in them that the veneer of civilisation is sometimes worn so thin that those who have the eye to see may get wonderful and startling glimpses of the primal man beneath.

*Du reste*, if this recital entertains the reader half as much as the journey did me, then the publisher will be well repaid for all my trouble.

PANERA, 1912.

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TRAVELS WITHOUT BAEDEKER

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# TRAVELS WITHOUT BAEDEKER

## CHAPTER I

### BOMBAY TO SUEZ

**T**HE Expedition, consisting at that time only of myself, the wielder of this unaccustomed pen, started out from Bombay about the middle of Spring, equipped with high hopes, great projects, forty-one pounds sterling and an incredibly dilapidated suit-case.

I had no definite plan of action, my idea being just to wander as far and wide, and for as long a time as the above-mentioned shekels would allow. It is not a large sum, and in the ordinary course of events might take a man from New York to Naples, provided he was of strictly moderate habits, a teetotaller and not over-liberal to his steward. So it was obvious that my course must be shaped otherwise than in the conventional manner of tourists if I was

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going to cover any considerable portion of the globe. The suit-case was therefore packed accordingly. In the first place its external appearance was such that not even the meanest porter, black or white, ever degraded himself by even offering to carry it, and the coppers thus saved provided the means of many miles of travel, as well as healthy if unwelcome exercise to its owner. Within was a complete outfit of khaki—khaki shirts with byronic collars, a khaki tie, khaki vests, pyjamas, khaki everything. The point was that washing them required so little skill that I myself could undertake the task with success equal to that of the most accomplished *blanchisseuse*. Moreover, should circumstances ever delay the operation, the omission would not be so noticeable. There was besides a blue serge suit, nearly eight years old, with set of linen to match, a woolly waistcoat against chilly weather, and, bottom-most of all, in case of great emergency, a suit of chastest brown which had once been fairly fashionable. I mention these articles in some detail, as all subsequently had their exits and their entrances. I still look back with pardonable pride on the forethought with which that case was stocked; on no occasion did it ever really fail me, even when unexpectedly

## Bombay to Suez

raised to spheres which it was never destined to adorn. Yet such is the base ingratitude of man that there were times when I regarded its faithful tattered face with mingled shame and hate. In addition to the necessities of life it actually contained a few luxuries, in the shape of a revolver, a packet of cartridges that didn't fit, writing materials, a small, carefully chosen library of select standard books—so select, in fact, that I didn't read them then, nor have I yet—some pipes, and a gigantic tin of tobacco.

The ship which had the honour of conveying the Expedition over its first stage was one of a foreign line, rapidly becoming very popular among Anglo-Indians on account of its extraordinarily economical rates. It looked dreadfully small compared to the sea and the distance it had to go. I slunk on board with a hang-dog air, feeling horribly guilty at sailing under an alien flag, and with grave misgivings also as to what the second class might be like, picturing an abomination of hideous squalor, and already beginning to question my right of risking so valuable a life in the gratification of this freakish whim. It was, however, wonderfully well appointed and comfortable down below, though almost the entire deck space

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was occupied by the donkey-engine, a vile, unsavoury beast with a vicious habit of kicking if you happened to sit on the lever. The other passengers consisted of seven destitutes like myself, a few nuns, two or three priests, some English people of little importance and a host of foreigners. There is very little to be said about this part of the journey, for it is hard to imagine a duller waste of waters than that between Bombay and Aden. The Indian Ocean's only redeeming feature is its brilliant phosphorescence under the romantic moon. That phenomenon seemed to weave a subtle spell of glamour around many pairs of youthful hearts, but alas, in no way concerned me. Such thrills as we experienced emanated either from our own resources of entertainment, the little peculiarities of the other passengers, or passing ships, the latter always a source of huge excitement in that monotonous existence. Once an antiquated British cruiser sailed scornfully by; it was good to see the flag at our stern come down with a rush, as the grim bull-dog, curtly acknowledging, swept on his supercilious course.

My stable companions were a couple of young Russian Jews, reared in Bombay, *en route* to London, then on the sea for the first time, and very mistrustful of it, so much so

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that nothing would induce them to leave their bunks for several days, though the sea was perfectly flat. They were, however, nice-mannered, civil lads, and one didn't grudge them the money they are bound to make. The fourth inmate was an American officer from the Philippines, a tremendous personality, but a disappointment. He might have been so entertaining, but one could only find him overwhelming, for—to be quite frank—he was a crude and colossal liar. With a few more years' practice he will perhaps reach the sublime; then one will be glad to meet him again.

We destitutes were very grateful to the foreign element for many things. Their kind consideration in never crowding us out of the baths was most marked; and they provided us with innocent amusement in a variety of ways. On the first note of a meal bell, the alacrity with which they arose and rushed for the flesh-pots was almost awe-inspiring; they soared high above such foolish conventionalities as delaying to wash, or brush the hair, when the deeper issues of life were at stake. "First down, best—or perhaps the only one—fed," seemed to be their motto.

Life on this junk was far from unpleasant

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in a dull, inanimate sort of way. I used to dig out of the soots and smuts a hollow for my chair near to the great gulf fixed between the first and second classes, because there I was most remote from mine enemy the donkey-engine, and so reclined, dreamily meditating on the problems of existence. Unfortunately, a lady of the first class, long, lank and forbidding, used to come and stare across at me through her lorgnette as though I had been some curious zoological specimen. Finally, exasperated at this continued impertinence, I was compelled to return the compliment through a telescope; then the nuisance ceased. After that the days sped by in quiet contemplation and unobtrusive observation of fellow man and woman. It was amusing to watch a pair of pretty sisters, over on the other side; they were so fresh and wholesome, and quite rightly monopolised almost the whole of the male attention. Great and dangerous is the power of well-favoured femininity; practically limitless when accompanied by brains. Happily, on this occasion it appeared to be innocent of that perilous adjunct.

We had one really serious complaint, and one only. This was against the linen arrangements. Each passenger was supplied with one



## Bombay to Suez

sheet, and was faced with the alternative of sleeping in it, or using it as a bath towel. Personally, I made it serve the double purpose ; but one night a dire calamity occurred. In those sultry seas most people sleep on deck ; they even promenade them till quite a late hour of the morning in pyjamas, greatly to the consternation of gentle tourists and others unacquainted with this primitive habit. The etiquette, though rigid, is very simple. If while thus scantily attired, you happen to meet a lady friend, you both just pretend not to know each other—that's all. This, though, is a digression, and I trust I have not raised expectations of a gallant encounter. Well, during the starlit hours, while I lay sleeping on the vibrating deck, somewhere over the screw (again to avoid the donkey engine), wrapped in my damp and precious sheet, a sudden gust of icy bitterness carried it overboard, and then I could neither sleep nor bathe till I had confessed my loss and paid in ill-spared francs the price of Nature's wanton cruelty.

On the fifth day we began to enter the Gulf of Aden. The shores gradually closed in on either side, so restricting the channel that ships were soon visible all round us. Superstition credits this gulf with being the most

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shark infested locality in the world ; these loathsome monsters follow ships in, and then, it is supposed, owing to some tidal peculiarity cannot get out again.

Early on the sixth morning we reached Aden. Being no supporter of the daylight saving bill I did not go ashore. As a matter of fact, no one ever does who hasn't got to, though once, in former days, I had found myself wading up the main street, ankle deep in sand. It consists of the harbour and the dwelling quarter ; this latter is situated in the crater of an extinct volcano, one of the harsh barren rocky hills that contain and surround the whole. On them the sun beats down with merciless intensity, shrouding all in a sickly veil of reflected shimmering heat—no touch of colour anywhere relieves the eye ; it is no place for man to live in. Swarms of grinning, gesticulating, shouting, thrusting negroes, Somalis, Arabs and other nondescript hawkers, come thronging over the sides, loudly and unceremoniously urging passengers to buy their wares, which are cigarettes, shells, postcards, horns and skins, but chiefly fans and ostrich feathers. The connoisseur can do a pretty good deal in the latter there.

Our stay was of short duration, about a

## Bombay to Suez

couple of hours; then we headed up the Red Sea. There one passes quite close to several desolate islands, and usually one or other shore is visible. Both are equally inhospitable and uninviting, being of the same nature as the barren rocks of Aden. Sailors say that this is one of the most difficult sea lanes of the whole chart to navigate, and at that time the perils were enhanced by the amenities of the Turco-Italian War in tampering with the lights. Under stress of the anxiety thus occasioned, I discovered a notice in the cabin stating that my diminutive pillow was likewise my life-belt. This, then, accounted for its hardness. The directions further expressed a hope that, if properly adjusted, it might support one in the water. Confidence was at once restored. On the eighth day we sighted Sinai's ragged peak, and the following morning the anchor dropped with a harsh grinding rattle into Suez Harbour.

## CHAPTER II

### SUEZ TO CAIRO

**A**T the last moment one of the destitutes decided to accompany the Expedition through Egypt. We had been in the same house at Rugby, where he was always known as the "Doctor," in deference to his extensive knowledge on the subject of inquests. After taking an alcoholic farewell of the others, we chartered a sort of dhow by dint of profound haggling, and set sail for the shore, along with a charming old German missionary and a butterfly lady of extreme brilliance, who emerged in a perfect blaze of glory somewhere from the darkest depths of the ship. The German was intent on verifying some wild theory of the Great Pyramid having been built with a metrical and dimensional significance, already practically proved beyond all question by the fact that it bears an angle of  $36\frac{1}{4}^{\circ}$  to the Holy City. I gathered vaguely it all had a great deal to do with the end of the world, but

## Suez to Cairo

it was rather too deep for my shallow intelligence. However, I wished him the very best of luck. On rounding the basin we saw a Turkish transport and a number of small craft of war. Having put into this neutral port and unarmed, their crews were now leading a life of peace and jollity. Nothing very much was doing when we arrived at the Quai; it was still early, and the Customs officials slept on. We insisted on having them roused, and even had the temerity to hammer on the Chief's door. He made a very leisurely toilette considering it merely consisted of putting on a fez and clearing his throat, for his uniform was also his nightdress. He felt our pulses, examined our tongues, and extorted about two shillings for these undesired attentions. Then he directed the Doctor's dirty linen bag to be cast into a huge steam boiler and stewed there for thirty minutes. This made it rather a close thing whether we were going to catch the train or not, so, to curtail the proceedings, the Doctor resorted to stratagem. Simulating extreme terror he rushed up to the stoker and screamed out that among the soiled clothes was a piece of guncotton which he was taking home to his mother; but the uncultured Egyptian either didn't understand French, or else the Doctor used the wrong word for that

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explosive, for the terrifying news was received with imperturbable calm.

When at last this unflattering process of disinfection was ended, we dashed off to the station at top speed, just in time to book our third-class tickets and catch the Cairo train. In Oriental countries no European ever goes third and rarely second; and now that we were face to face with the ordeal, the Doctor, after a repugnant glance at the Bedouens and Bashibazouks, as he called them, almost recoiled, and I foresaw myself making the journey alone; pride, however, forbade his going back on his previous intention, and I soothed my uneasiness at his discomfort with the reflection that a few trifling hardships would be exceedingly good for so fastidious a nature. It is always easy to bear philosophically the troubles of others.

That long distance cost us only five shillings and threepence. The train was a corridor one, and the third-class carriages reasonably comfortable. They contain successive rows of plain latticed seats, facing each other in pairs, with a passage down the centre; each seat is for two people. Our companions were most interesting, though indeed the fragrance they exhaled was a little overpowering. There were Egyptians, Arabs, Bedouins, Soudanese, Nubians, all

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sorts and conditions, in all varieties of North African costume. The Doctor and I sat *vis-à-vis*; behind him were two Gypjie soldiers, one a sergeant. We were greatly struck by the fine physique and strong, clear-cut features of these young warriors. At first though, they caused us keen anxiety by leaning their Martinis up against the seat with the muzzles pointing straight at the back of the Doctor's head. As their bandoliers bristled with ball cartridge, we hadn't the slightest doubt the rifles were loaded. A little later one of them dived into the very bottom of his kit bag and proudly produced a murderous-looking revolver to show a friend. Our agitation was not allayed when they playfully started snapping the trigger; but by some special providence this at any rate was not loaded. The friend for whose benefit our nerves had been so racked was an Arab of rather striking and unusual appearance. He had a light olive complexion, deep dark luminous eyes, long straight nose, features moulded with almost feminine delicacy, which, added to a long and sinuous frame, gave the whole a strong romantic suggestion. He wore a white linen skull cap, bound around, turbanwise, with pale blue silk, a long Arab smock of white cotton, coarsely embroidered, covering his voluminous trousers

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of the same material, and over all a part-worn black overcoat of decidedly British make and fashion. Grey canvas shoes without socks completed his turn-out. Most of the poorer people, that is to say Arabs and coolies, wore just a long smock of coarse, dark blue stuff. The lower class of Egyptians, too, wear this long robe, though in different colours, and they can always be distinguished by the fez.

As we proceeded, the glorious air of Egypt, exhilarating as sparkling wine after those oily Eastern seas, soon raised our spirits to their highest pitch. The scenery, too, was not without its own peculiar charm. As far as Ismalia it presented simply an undulating sea of sand, except along the canal, where there is a bountiful vegetation. For some distance the rail runs parallel to the Canal, and the effect of great steamers sailing apparently through the desert is most curious. As we approached the valley of the Nile, the character of the country naturally changed. Crops, cotton, corn, tobacco, became more and more abundant, testifying to the genius of irrigation; the villages were no longer of squalid mud and wattle, there being even stone houses of modern Italian style among them, and as far as the eye could reach no desert sands were any longer visible.



## Suez to Cairo

We had to change at Ismalia. The Doctor remained sentinel over the baggage while I rushed off to buy our frugal lunch of bread, but on my return his post was deserted, and I eventually discovered him *de flagrante delicto*, wolfing ham sandwiches at the buffet. This was a bad start. The next train was much the same, except that it was infested with hawkers of inferior tobacco, penknives, purses and other tawdry trifles, vociferously plying their trade up and down the central passage. We were again neighbours of the soldiers, and this time had some conversation with them in French, of which language they spoke a few words; they also occasionally accepted our cigarettes. Presently the sergeant bought some tobacco and papers from a passing vendor—everyone makes his own cigarettes in Egypt—and began to roll a fat and prosperous one. The far-sighted Doctor suddenly feigned profound slumber, while I watched the operation with simple interest. The adherence of the deftly rolled masterpiece was well and thoroughly executed by his tongue, then he lit it and, removing it from his own fair lips, proffered it to me with a courteous salaam. Recovering from a momentary confusion, I faced the situation like a hero. He made another, and I strove vindictively to

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wake the Doctor, but only received stealthy kicks on the shin while he snored more loudly than ever.

Anon I too began to doze and my head fell back on something soft and comforting, which presently moved, and I turned, horror-struck, to confront a Soudanese youth of loathly aspect; my pillow had been his head, which perhaps accounted for the subsequent unrest in mine. I tried another seat with better success, till at some station about the biggest man I've ever seen, an Egyptian, entered and sat down beside my sleeping form, with the result that by process of sheer displacement I shot off the end on to the floor. Entertaining though this journey undoubtedly was, it had begun to pall, and we were not sorry when the train thundered into Cairo station.

## CHAPTER III

### CAIRO

SOME one had told us that the Y.M.C.A. would meet the requirements of our modest purses; that we could dine there amply, if not sumptuously, for about sixpence apiece, and that beds might be had at a proportionate price. Thither we repaired through the modernised streets teeming with a medley of the nations, till we brought up at a new, imposing edifice, the goal of our ambition. Unhappily there was some difficulty about latch-keys after half-past nine at night, so negotiations were abruptly broken off, and we had to seek our fortune elsewhere. Chance led us to an Arab hotel situated in a by-street only a few minutes' walk from the Opera Square. Although termed an Arab hotel, you must not imagine it as peopled entirely by the wild Children of the Desert, for these actually formed the minority of guests, and even then were represented only by sheiks and persons of

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some civilisation. Egyptians in Western costume seemed to be the most numerous; in fact it was appointed with the design of attracting their custom. We were received at the entrance by the proprietor, a pleasant-faced Egyptian, who heartily congratulated us on coming to the right place and straightway conducted us up several flights of uncarpeted, uneven stone stairs to his best bedrooms, which he offered for two francs a day, including a cup of coffee in the morning. Personally I was quite satisfied. Each room contained a bed, a chair and a washhandstand, the jug of which would doubtless be filled on demand, and with equal certainty the sheets had once been clean. The Doctor, however, curtly asked to see the bath room, to which the proprietor at once led us, two stories down, not without pride in his eye. The "bath" was an ordinary small water tap, projecting a few inches from the wall, at an altitude of about seven feet. Few other hotels in Cairo had such a bath, said our host proudly. We quite believed it. Naturally in a house for Mahomedans all toilette arrangements were adapted to their functional customs. The Doctor wore an expression of indescribable misery. It was quite unreasonable that the pleasure of his little tour should be sacrificed to

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my idiosyncrasies, so I begged him to go to some more congenial place, and though I should remain there, we could manage to foregather after meals to see the sights. His countenance cleared like a flash ; in less than ten minutes he was ensconced in Shepheard's, and I formally took up my abode at the Grand Hotel Abbas, the only European then dwelling under its roof, and, I am convinced, the only one who ever at any time had found himself in that position of doubtful bliss. A horrific, woolly-headed negro lad performed the duties of chambermaid to the whole establishment. In such hostels there is a tacit understanding that the staff augment their exiguous emoluments by the appropriation of any unconsidered trifles they may happen to fancy among the guests' belongings, which the latter are indiscreet enough to leave about. Though the locks held true, my poor suit-case was beginning to gape at the ends, showing an aperture almost the size of a small negro's hand, so by way of intimidation I strewed some of the misfit cartridges about the room in conspicuous places ; but with the only result that when I returned that night they had vanished.

In the cool of the evening, the Expedition concentrated and wandered abroad through the

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gaily animated streets. We took our way down the local Bond Street, from Shepherd's to the Opera Square, along "Cigarette-land." You see there the shops whence almost every cigarette you have ever smoked found its origin. As a matter of fact, little tobacco is now grown in Egypt; it comes from Turkey and Asia Minor but it is made up there, since the climate is so essentially favourable to its manipulation. The main wealth of the country springs from cotton. Scarcely less numerous are the shops of antiques, of souvenirs, photographs and post-cards. Itinerant vendors of these also harass the stranger with their limpet-like attentions. I should probably have escaped their notice, but for the Doctor's resplendent attire. One offered me an obviously Manchester-made dagger for a hundred piastres. "Five," said I, derisively, and before I could retract, the tawdry horror was mine.

Towards the Square, the increasing number of Cafés cannot fail to astonish one. They occupy pretty well the whole of the pavement space in the Square itself, except along that side bounded by the railings of the Esbekich Gardens. One sees in these Cafés an extraordinarily heterogeneous collection of men, varying in skin from Northern fairness, through all shades of

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Southern races, to deepest negroid black; all smoking pipes, hookahs, cigarettes, and drinking beer, coffee, absinthe, etc., according to taste more than nationality or creed. We sat down at what appeared to be the most fashionable, ordered a glass of beer each, and looked around with wide-eyed interest. At the next table to us were a couple of Greeks, next to them a respectable old negro, in sober frock coat and fez, conversing amiably with an Italian; further on various Europeans, whom one couldn't exactly fix at that distance, crowds of smartly dressed Egyptians, and not a few Arab sheiks, the latter for the most part in long robes of some sheeny bronze material, which I can only describe as like the skin of a brown cobra. The waiters were Italian and German. With our beer was served a small plate of savouries—a piece of pickled chili, a morsel of sardine, a tiny piece of bread, an olive, a fragment of cheese, a square of Turkish delight and so on. The quantity and variety of these delicacies vary with the status of the café you happen to be patronising. Judging by the proportion of *jeunesse turbouchee* indulging in alcoholic beverages, one might have supposed that the Copts greatly preponderated. While sipping our bock, we were subjected to a perfect plague of bootblacks, who, fighting

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among themselves for their prey, almost dragged us limb from limb. All the time the inevitable hawkers flitted about from table to table. Again many sold cigarettes, but others proffered quite unexpected things; some had watches, some socks, many had baskets of prawns and crabs—fancy being asked to buy a prawn in the Carlton at tea-time!—others tried their luck with different kinds of nuts and sweetmeats. One hopeful came along with a crate full of young turkeys. What there was about us that suggested prospective buyers, I cannot say, but he fixed on us, and it was only by the help of a waiter that we got rid of him.

We soon learned to our cost that it is a fatal error to show the slightest gleam of interest in any of their wares; once thus committed, nothing short of a purchase, or personal violence, will free one from their clamorous persecutions. The deaf ear and the lacklustre eye are the only weapons adequate to the occasion. Quite an army, a pathetic little army, chiefly of European children—some such tiny mites—and tottering old men, try to tempt one into buying lottery tickets. During nearly a month in Egypt, I only saw one sold. Hope indeed dies hard.

Just before darkness the Square presents a gay and lively spectacle. At that season there



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are hardly any tourists, so we saw only the genuine inhabitants of Cairo. The traffic strikes one as a trifle haphazard; one has the continual expectation of an accident. Great motors go purring past, dodging the electric trams, and two-horse carriages of brightly-clad ladies; smart traps drawn by blooded bays clatter in and out; while in the very thick of the throng an occasional camel and donkey is being urged rapidly along by its adroit rider, lending an almost burlesque touch to the scene. Meanwhile, a constant stream of foot-passengers nimbly evades the traffic; Europeans and Orientals, feathers and veils, hats and fezzes flood the pavements, all jostling in indiscriminate confusion. The ladies in Western costume are mostly Italians, Greeks and Armenians, with a few advanced Egyptians, all of a very dark complexion, nor particularly well-favoured. Their hats and clothes, so ultra-fashionable and gorgeous, give a decidedly meretricious aspect to these honest wives and daughters. Here and there through the crush strides sturdy Thomas Atkins, with his own inimitable gait—brave, bone-headed, beef-faced man. Sometimes also in this swarthy sea, one sights an Englishwoman, belated tourist perhaps, with shining face of transcendental cleanliness.

It was good to see real, pulsating life again

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after years of exile. We lingered on, watching the unrehearsed play till the myriad brilliant lights pointed haggard shadows on the faces of the thinning crowd. Then I dined in state with the Doctor, having first, to his immense relief, exchanged my khaki suit for the blue serge.

The inner man replenished, we were drawn by the sound of music to the gardens. Here were all manner of amusements, rinks, bioscopes and the like, but the centre of attraction was a British military band, discoursing popular airs. All around the stand was a dense crowd of much the same composition as we had previously seen in the Square. A café opposite the stand was absolutely packed, and its roof thronged with the élite. Two things struck us most forcibly, again the exaggerated dress of the women, and secondly the mean stature and physiognomy of the men. All selections were encored by ugly penetrating hisses. During the intervals, those who had not an envied seat in the café rose and promenaded around the stand: among them, towering in healthy contrast, some of our men of the Guards, the Lancers and the Line. These people were all there for their amusement, but an indefinable oppression seemed to weigh upon them: they were not, somehow, a happy crowd.

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At the conclusion, when the National Anthem was played, scarcely one, either out of gratitude for the entertainment he had received, or out of respect to the Administration which secures his daily bread, deemed it necessary to rise or remove his hat.

That night, on entering my room, with an involuntary shudder, my first care was to open up the windows, which gave on to a microscopic balcony, so rickety that I didn't venture upon it. While undressing, I suddenly became conscious of an uneasy feeling, the sense of being watched. I looked up and was dismayed to behold a huge Arab contemplating me from the balcony with an air of complete absorption. Meeting my gaze, he nodded a friendly greeting and disappeared. It seemed creepily uncanny and disquieting till I discovered that his room also opened on the same balcony.

In due course we turned our attention to the Pyramids. We agreed that for the satisfaction of our dear friends and relations it would be advisable to visit them, though we both had a strong prejudice against recognised institutions. An electric tramway, extending almost to their base, makes the excursion a very simple one, provided you can hit off the right tram—not so easy an affair as the casual reader might

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suppose, since they only run at certain intervals, owing to the bridge over the Nile being raised for navigation. As we stood on the kerb, eagerly scanning the index-boards of passing trams, an Arab dragoman in flowing white robes, divining our intention, introduced himself under the propitious name of Solomon, and undertook personally to conduct the Expedition for a trifling remuneration. He carefully explained that it was only because there was no other business at that season that he could be seen about with the likes of us. When we learned to know and love each other better, he told us he made as much as £300 a season. With his expert guidance we speedily got under way, as far as Gezireh, a suburb on the other side of the Nile, and a favourite evening resort of all classes on account of its delightful public gardens. Thence half an hour's pleasant ride along the bank of the Nile brought us to our destination—the world-famed Pyramids.

We shuffled along in the sand, resisting the noisy temptations of camel and donkey boys, plodding on our own feet from one to another. Their stupendous grandeur, once realised, can never be forgotten. Now all around was a waste of sand, grey and colourless. I had seen them before in early winter: it was at the sunset hour,

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with the Nile in flood; this waste of sand was then one vast expanse of lurid splendour, on which they threw their gigantic trembling shadows, and which slowly faded to pink of rose and then to steely black beneath the jewelled sky. Presently we found ourselves before the Sphinx, and stood contemplating the oldest of all faces, the face which, once strangely beautiful, is now so scarred and so inscrutable. It has looked upon the petty weaknesses and frailties of human things for countless æons, but shows no pity, no compassion, no tolerance. Grim, impenetrable, sardonic, Time brings no softening lines to that relentless countenance. The succeeding centuries each add a harsher touch. Alexander, Cæsar, Mark Antony, Napoleon, all the captains of history, have stood beneath its shadow and felt their own insignificance. How the vainglorious Corsican must have hated it! But Horemku, the Ancient, could be naught else than indifferent to these children of a day.

One wonders if, sometimes when alone with the sympathetic stars and the silent Nile, who share its secret and its sorrow, that scornful expression relaxes, and the proud head bows down beneath the weight of all the ages—a momentary respite from its eternal vigil over the Past.

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The Doctor, more impressionable than I, was the first to break the silence.

"Let's push on, old chap," he said. "If I look at that damn thing any longer I shall go dotty."

## CHAPTER IV

### CAIRO STILL.

**W**E passed about a week, thoroughly happy, loafing around in more or less an aimless sort of way. Solomon had permanently attached himself to the Expedition and added greatly to its gaiety by his entirely unconscious humour. He had, like a great many others of the lower orders, a crudely outlined bird tattooed on either temple, which, he informed us, was a sure protection to his eyes and greatly increased their power of vision. Poor Solomon! This talisman had availed him little, for one of his eyes was sightless, the result of a sandstorm; an affliction which we didn't detect for several days. He was, however, quite insensible of the irony; it was the will of God, and he was only grateful to the other bird for preserving at least one eye.

There came a morning when Solomon ordered us to the Museum, whither we set

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out on foot without any remarkable show of enthusiasm. Near the gates we encountered an endless host of children, demurely walking two and two.

"The Sacred Crocodile?" I asked; but Solomon was at some pains to explain that they were boys and girls.

Our inspection of the Museum was not a lengthy one. We both, I think, found it rather depressing. It was uncanny to look on works of art more than three thousand years old which had all the appearance of being the product of yesterday; and on the drawn faces and forms, still perfect in outline, of those long dead men and women who had lived and laughed in that same land forty centuries before—now exposed to the view of curious eyes. Why thus disturb their rest? For corpses are not pretty things. Nevertheless, there was much that pleased, although we left with senses reeling at the overwhelming antiquity of what we had seen.

We tottered across the road into a fifth-rate eating house, for it was the hour of lunch. The Doctor now merely retained his room in civilisation, and for meals had taken to scavenging with me. This process consisted in frequenting only those restaurants suited to



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the condition of the exchequer. They were not those generally patronised by Crowned Heads. The number of eating houses is undoubtedly one of the most curious features of Cairo; there are whole streets of nothing else. Even when one penetrates the remotest quarters, they still flourish in undiminished quantities. Possibly no one feeds beneath his own roof, as is widely but erroneously believed to be the case in Paris. The better class institutions of this kind, situated around the Sharia Kamel in incredible profusion, are chiefly Greek. The bill of fare, a huge sheet, is printed on one side in that language, and on the reverse in French—to give every one a chance, as it were. One is offered a large choice of dishes, their cost is not exorbitant, and the service is prompt and moderately clean. The price of an ordinary meat course varies from about five to seven *petits* piastres, that is, roughly, sixpence to sevenpence; it is sometimes excellently cooked. We found, by painful process of elimination, that plain omelette was their masterpiece, run pretty closely by ragout of beef. An unusual order always entailed a long wait, and not seldom ended in disaster and bitter recrimination.

The restaurant that we now entered,

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however, occupied one of the lowest rungs of the social ladder; how low we didn't dream until we were actually inside, and then honour forbade retreat. The only other visitor, a little negro, was busy with an enormous plate of macaroni in a dark corner, gulping as if in deadly fear of its being snatched away from him any second. We thought it prudent to order the best item on the grease-stained list, to wit, roast chicken, as that delicious bird was priced only at  $4\frac{1}{2}d$ . Though dry and mummified, quite in keeping with the spirit of the locality, we were glad it was no worse. We used our fingers in preference to the wooden-handled, grimy knives and two-pronged forks, greatly to the astonishment of our cultured host, who pitied our simplicity.

Egypt is often accused of being a melancholy land of the Past, but Cairo at night decidedly belies this reputation; it is very much alive indeed. Our first evening there, the instant we left the hotel after dinner, a great, blue-clad Arab, with stooping shoulders and shifty, leering face, greeted us. "Hullo, old sport, who are you nohow?" quoth the Doctor—for we were in the after-dinner mood of amiability. "I am Adolphus, guide of the night-time," he replied in hollow, suggestive tones.

## Cairo still

"What-ho, the perlot thickens," I hissed.  
"Whither would'st guide us, varlet?"

He then reeled off a catalogue of obscenities so unspeakable, that even the Doctor and I, who claimed no moral astuteness, were somewhat staggered. Adolphus was only the first of many such human sharks—"crepuscular specialists" the Doctor called them—who offered their services at every turn.

Cafés chantants abound on all sides. Many of their orchestras are composed entirely of women, tired and jaded beyond description, who begin immediately to play some ragtime air on the entrance of even a solitary customer, in the hope of melting a penny or so from him. But generally these places are well filled, for it would appear that no one dreams of going to bed till long after midnight in that festive city. With night the noise of the streets is redoubled; the whole population pours out into them; barrel-organs, street-singers, native musicians, adding their sounds to the cries of the hawkers, help to swell the bewildering tumult.

Just off the Sharia Kamel are streets along the whole length of which the upper stories teem with Magdalenes. They throng the balconies and scream pleasantries at the passers-by; if his

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attention is still unattracted, they throw nuts and such-like missiles on his head. Pickets of military police parade the thoroughfares to safeguard their wandering sheep from the consequences of indiscretion. Once, turning out of an animated street into a darker side one, we tripped over some inert mass on the pavement. It was a donkey sleeping. Another time we went up an alley connecting two main streets. This was the playground of the dregs of Cairo. It was about eight feet wide, gorged with surging scum, mostly Oriental. Its floor was cobbled, uneven, with great hollows, all filled with pools of refuse. The houses, each open to the street, were either cafés, gambling dens or brothels. Sherbet sellers, shouting and clattering their brazen vessels, struggled through the press. Women, squatting on their thresholds, clutched at the clothes of passers-by, shrieking strident invitations, which, if unresponded to, changed to shrill abuse. Some of them were white—one dared not guess the tragedy behind each poor painted face. From some of these cafés the music of hurdygurdies, mingling with that of tom-toms and Eastern instruments from others, crashed out in deafening discord. In many of them men were doing the belly-dance, a species of the Indian nautch, ungraceful, revolting.

## Cairo still

Blaring, flaring lights lit up with ghastly garishness the turmoil pervaded by this indescribably hideous din and stench of foul intensity.

Cairo is placed at the portals of the East. It is not surprising that one finds such scenes as that where the two states of civilisation commingle, since each, borrowing from the other, taints the loan with its own peculiarities, thereby throwing up the uglier side in sharp relief.

## CHAPTER V

### UPPER EGYPT

**A**LMOST suddenly the Doctor developed an enthusiasm for Egyptology. Some mysterious revival of a long-forgotten lore, some study of his youthful days, seemed to awake within him. We were looking dully at a row of hieroglyphics one day, when the scales fell from his eyes and he spake with the tongue of authority, indicating the Crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt, the symbol of the soul, the Radamanthus of those days, and many other marvels, while I stood, hat in hand, gaping in open-mouthed astonishment. Thenceforward my bearing towards him was marked by a more deferential courtesy. When he proposed an excursion to visit the wonders of the Upper Nile, I could only put up a feeble opposition, pleading the folly of having ideas beyond one's purse, and the cessation of the steamer service at this season. His new-born majesty sat like

## Upper Egypt

a diadem about his brow. I quailed before his eye as he sternly demolished my poor excuses, and I felt miserably guilty at my presumption in having dreamt of obstructing the march of Science, nay, obscuring the light of Posterity. So it was settled that the Expedition should advance on Luxor by train the following evening. They say that the voyage up the Nile by water is one of the pleasantest experiences the heart of man can desire; and one can well believe it is so, hence it was a little sad that circumstances forced on us the more prosaic course. Solomon was keenly interested; I think he must have had a wife or two up there, so great was his anxiety to accompany us. We had to break it to him regretfully but firmly that the idea was out of the question; quite impossible. He protested he didn't even mind going third class. I was glad of that, as it was the way in which I intended to travel myself. Accordingly, at the appointed hour, somewhere about eight o'clock, we presented ourselves at the station, baggage in hand. We were again separated, for naturally the dignity of so profound a Wisdom had to be maintained with pomp and circumstance, by every modern appliance of comfort and convenience. I bade the Doctor a respectful good-night, and then prepared to endure

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what turned out to be the bitterest fourteen hours of my life.

The carriage, exactly similar to those on the Suez line, was absolutely crowded with travellers and their baggages and bundles in about equal proportion. I managed to get a window seat near the end, that is, near the door. A veiled lady of imperious manner sat next to me, while their belongings and her husband, a tolerably prosperous-looking Egyptian, occupied the opposite one. There was scarcely room to move hand or foot. The lady used my knees as an umbrella stand, without so much as by your leave, as though I had been an inanimate object, which, indeed, I feared I shortly should be. She was exceedingly beautiful according to Oriental ideas, that is to say, she ran to decided *embonpoint*, which made my position—from a European point of view—more unenviable than ever. I was greatly surprised by her husband's bearing towards her; he was extraordinarily attentive, constantly unpacking a basket of foodstuffs for her, plying her with all sorts of delicacies therefrom, repacking it again when she had finished for the time being; then fetching water for her to drink, and to wash her deeply henna-dyed fingers in. All the time she scolded in an unmelodious, querulous monotone.



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No doubt he accounted himself richly blessed in the possession of so ponderous a partner, for these amenities seemed strange to one who had only seen very different relations between the sexes, among Mussulmans in India.

The glamour of travelling among these people had long since worn off; I wanted only rest. My companions were nearly all simple peasant folk. As many as could slept crouched on the seats and their bundles, while the remainder lay underneath or on the floor. The more fortunate did not hesitate to use the latter as footstools, nor did their being, as it were, in the line of fire, prevent them from expectorating with the utmost heartiness and abandon. Those that saw no chance of sleep whiled away the time in eating and talking or rather shouting, for the guttural Arabic apparently does not lend itself to conversational undertones.

The hours were very long. At each station I struggled and stumbled out on to the platform in search of a glass of beer, hoping that Bacchus would aid negligent Morpheus in his forgotten duties. Then I forced my way back, followed by the heartfelt curses of disturbed sleepers. It was trying sometimes, forgetting that one was third and not in India, to be sworn at and jostled by natives. Yet those people were very

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kind : many gave me all sorts of food ; pieces of chappatti, coarse bread, vegetables, roast beans, each of which was more unpalatable than the last, but one could not have been so ill-mannered as to refuse them ; I just had to nibble till opportunity occurred of surreptitiously dropping them out of the window or into my pocket. Another endless hour passed. I gazed wistfully at an enormous English family of all sizes and ages, in transit from the dining to the sleeping car, and they looked back, I thought, with pity for the poor English derelict who had sunk so low. The hardness of my latticed wooden seat was growing almost unendurable. Gratefully I thanked my stars for eight unloved months passed, immediately previous to setting out on this enterprise, at an institution where one spent never less than five hours daily performing wondrous antics in the saddle. Verily out of evil cometh good when one can least foresee it. I had hoped the crowded carriage would speedily empty as the train proceeded on its way. Midnight came and went ; so far, three had got out and five in—that is, two down on a division. I found myself becoming more and more indignant at the thriftless extravagance of these simple country people in making such long journeys, which must have been far beyond their means.

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Some more hours went. Opposite me good husband was fitfully dozing in a position of exquisite discomfort. Madame had woken up. I noticed that her face, at least as much as was visible through the veil, was not unpleasing. Presently I felt, or fancied I felt, her dainty toe lightly tapping mine. For a moment wild visions of the Arabian Nights flashed through my fantasy, but for a moment only. I am a modest youth, and a crowded carriage of snoring, shouting, eating, spitting Bedouins and fellaheen seemed to me a somewhat unfavourable setting for Romance. Moreover, earlier in the night good husband had given me a small cucumber, so having eaten his salt I could scarcely be guilty of such indelicacy or base ingratitude as to raise my eyes to those of the Light of his Life. So I passed off the situation in sphinx-like insensibility of her subtle attentions—the latter probably entirely imaginary on my part.

A few hours more, aching in every limb and bitterly cold, I had now definitely decided at the risk of busting the budget finally and for ever, either to return to Cairo in a wagon-lit or buy a cushion. Quite suddenly the darkness melted into the half light of false dawn, disclosing a shadow-land of ghostly palmgroves, flocks, and fields wherein the toilers were already at work,

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threshing and winnowing in that primitive manner still obtaining in the East. Presently the sun climbed a ragged ridge of hills and spread his golden carpet on the luxuriant valley of the Nile, a goodly land, fair to behold.

There was a great clearing of throats and redoubled shouting as, one by one, the sleepers came back to consciousness. With one accord everybody began to eat again. The amount of eating was positively amazing. A youth got in with a huge basket of hard-boiled eggs. All were sold almost immediately, and soon the original litter and debris on the floor was covered by their shells. These eggs were black and nauseating; it was impossible to distinguish the white from the yolk. Fearing further misplaced generosity, I hastily busied myself with a piece of bread. Four more leaden hours, and the train drew into Luxor. The Doctor and I had a most affecting meeting, and then adjourned to a quasi-civilised, semi-barbarous hotel, with a long and pretentious name, where we shortly enjoyed the luxury of a bath. It was indeed a luxury, the long, lie-out bath, after the thin, icy stream with a seven-foot drop of my Cairo hostel.

We were both agreed on the wisdom of reposing till lunch time. Having done ample

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justice to that meal, like giants refreshed we set out in search of fresh fields of discovery, wherein the Doctor's miraculous, new-found gift might be applied, with one dared not calculate what benefits to all people that on earth do dwell. We would never admit to ourselves that we had practically degenerated into common, ordinary globe-trotters of the more impecunious sort. The Doctor is a devotee of Shakespeare. Once at Stratford-on-Avon, whither he had gone to burn incense on the altar of his idol, he fell in with a large army of touring American girls, who believed they were in Scotland. Since then the very word "globe-trotter" has been abhorrent to him.

A few minutes' walk along the bank of the Nile brought us to the famous temple of Luxor. This great work, perhaps the mightiest ever achieved by mortal man, has already been described in countless volumes of more or less merit and interest, so it is not my purpose to try and emulate their example. Our visit there was remarkable for one awe-inspiring occurrence; at the end of half an hour or so it was found that I could decipher the same number of heiroglyphics as the Doctor, with much the same infacility, whereupon our relations resumed once more their former footing of equality,

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though on a perceptibly higher plane, for they were now supported on a basis of mutual respect and admiration.

Next we trudged the best part of four miles along a sandy path to Karnak. Here the work of excavation was busily proceeding. Personally, I preferred that temple to anything in Egypt. It filled one's whole being with an overwhelming sense of its colossal grandeur; with triumph at puny man's conquest over the unfriendly forces of nature, after, none knows what incredible exertions; and with sympathy for those designers and toilers whose vast conceptions and gigantic labours still thrill the soul of a then undreamed of people. Savants tell us the construction of those massive piles represents fifteen hundred years of life. Even if this is so, the magnitude of the work is amazing and brings home to one with startling force the genius of that bygone race, who fashioned, not one, but myriads of sculptures, each a monumental masterpiece in itself. The nation must have teemed with artists.

During our walk back to the hotel, we were privileged to have actual experience of a desert sandstorm. This visitation, in the form of a rapidly moving, dark cloud, burst on us with appalling suddenness, struck us, buffeted us,

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stung our faces, scorched our eyes, choked us, and left us as suddenly as it had come.

Early the following morning, under a glorious sky and air, the expedition marched out, humming and singing, on an ill-fated excursion to Thebes. Our hotel dragoman, a somewhat surly youth, conducted the enterprise, and our lunch kept pace, skilfully balanced on the head of a native of the soil.

All went merry as a marriage bell. We soon reached the Nile and began to cross in a small boat, for the ferries were suspended at that season. In midstream, the native of the soil, the bearer of our luncheon, the star of all our hopes, suddenly decided to change his seat and straightway upset us. Though far from blasé, this impromptu entertainment bored us beyond words. With a despairing gurgle our lunch sank nine fathoms deep to the shifting sands below, and my noble pipe, tried and trusted friend of my darkest hours, went down with the ship. That was only to be expected. We wrung out our rags, and squelched along over the sand, less chirpy now. The going was heavy, and Thebes, clothed by the heat in a kind of quivering opalescence, looked a dreadfully long way off. We both thought with some bitterness of ponies in far away India,

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eating their heads off for want of exercise, while we, their lords and masters and oatwinners, were undergoing extremes of hardship because we lacked the means of hiring a donkey. The Doctor was irritable; he kept saying impolite things about the loser of our lunch. Amid all the confusion, that individual had had the almost superhuman prudence to swim to the other bank. Presently the Doctor began to step out at a pace ludicrously unsuited to his stature, as though trying to escape his own thoughts. "Doctor," I expostulated, "I've walked long and I've walked far, but never fast—it's too late to begin now," but the little fellow heeded not my entreaties, and we entered Thebes almost at a run.

We spent an hour or two wandering around more superb temples, looking at more gigantic statues and exploring various tombs. One of the latter is very remarkable, for the colour of its legends still remains perfect. It interested me a lot, because I could imagine exactly the character of its one-time occupant. I forget his name, but he was head gardener to one or other of the Pharaohs, it doesn't matter which; and it was obvious, from the pictures all around describing his life history, that he was a very smug person, kind-hearted to his family in a



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heavy, consequential sort of way, with a pronounced tincture of snobbishness about him; and that above all he was immensely proud of having achieved this pretentious resting-place for his portly carcass; it was a sign that he had risen above his own class—an emblem of unquestioned gentility. His wife was, no doubt, very haughty in her relations with other gardeners' wives. He was a man who knew his job, and sometimes did it; but Pharaoh's flowers? His apples and his onions? It's no business of mine, of course, and *de mortuis nihil nisi bonum*; but, still, that tomb was never built out of a gardener's wages.

Hard by we had the honour of being introduced to a number of mummies, the remains of poorer people dating from the Roman age, which had only been discovered two days before and were lying as they had been found. Then more temples. We were beginning to get a little impatient of this all-pervading "provision for death while in the prime of life" atmosphere which was the keynote, the religion, of the ancient Egyptians. It still survives in a very marked degree among the wealthier village-folk of Italy and south-eastern Switzerland. Their great ambition in life is to erect for themselves an imposing sepulchre in their local *campo santo*,

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for which purpose they strain their resources to an extent of absolute folly; then they contentedly, almost eagerly, await the day when they shall be laid in it for good and all.

We were rather tired now; we didn't want to see any more ruins, for, to the uninitiated, there is always a great sameness about them all. We discovered an attractively shady colonnade, where we subsided, mopped our brows, lay our ears back and pulled hard at damp cigarettes, without success; then fell into earnest thought of that beer beneath the Nile's blue wave. Our guide interrupted this melancholy reverie by a somewhat casual demand for a cigarette. The Doctor gave way to an explosive outburst of choler. "Clear out, you black-faced son of a burnt father!"—you can't very well be more uncivil to a Mahomedan than that—"Do you know," he continued, "what happens to disrespectful blighters like you in India? They have their thumbs cut off." The transgressor laughed heartily at this fantastic lie. He made a sweeping gesture with his down-turned palm, signifying a level plane. "In Egypt," he said, "all peoples is free." Presently we became aware of a one-eyed son of Khem mournfully regarding us from behind a column.

"What can we do for you?" we asked.

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"Nothing," he replied in a tone of apathetic listlessness. This fairly took our breath away; he must be unique in that land of incessant demand for baksheesh. However, our equilibrium was restored when he returned later on and sadly suggested that he could do with a "little something."

The dwellers in the huts around about were all anxious to sell us souvenirs in the form of little figures of the Pharaohs, scarabs, mummied cats and hawks. One imagined their good wives preparing a consignment of the latter once a year, in much the same manner as her old-fashioned Western sister makes the jam. While I was, doglike, scraping about for a comfortable spot with a view to a few minutes' silent thought, I uncovered a small scarred head and shoulders of Rameses II. Our guide scoffed at it; said it was one of those you bought for two piastres from the villagers. All the same, he seemed rather eager to possess it. Personally I am convinced it is a genuine relic; whether this conviction is right or wrong will never be known, for I jealously guard my treasure from the vulgar eyes of any who might rob me of that illusion.

Very reluctantly we left that colonnade to face the sun and the desert again. Far out in

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the solitude and the silence, midway between Thebes and the river, we came upon the Colossi of Memnon. These grim brethren, said to be sons of Tithonus and the Dawn,—because at daybreak they give forth a musical note—though worn beyond recognition, grey beyond weariness, have yet a striking and sinister suggestion of latent strength in their gaunt forms and long lean limbs, as they sit keeping their stern and lonely watch, gazing steadfastly into the eastern distance.

We returned to Cairo that night. It was a miserable journey for the poor Doctor, who, at the beginning of it, was overtaken by high fever and great pain in respiration, which he attributed to the effects of the sandstorm.

## CHAPTER VI

### CAIRO AGAIN

**O**N arrival at Cairo station, the invalid was so weak that he could hardly stand; he was transported forthwith to a nursing home, where men of grave, wise aspect in pince-nez and sombre coats mercilessly punched his chest and accused him of pneumonia. It was cruel luck for the homing exile, but he took the blow with heroic calm.

Decimated by disease, privation and poverty, the Expedition was now reduced to one-third its former strength. Solomon had indeed flocked back to the standard, but on being informed that his services must henceforward be entirely honorary, he hastily seceded with many expressions of goodwill and regret. I once more took up my abode in the Arab hostel, and continued the old scavenging existence. It had a great fascination somehow; the quaint people one used to see, and those cheap savoury dinners followed by a tiny cup of

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delicious *café à la turque*. Heaven only knows in what chamber of horrors they were cooked; it is not well to peer too deep beneath the surface, to make indiscreet inquiries into the cause of things, if one would live happily on this deceptive old earth where things are not always what they seem. Yet those squalid little restaurants had about them a charm, a glamour, which the Ritz or the Savoy could never hope to afford.

The coinage filled me with a constant sense of injustice and tyranny. The whole attitude of the land is as though the Egyptians can never forget that they were once "spoiled," and have ever since been determined to lose no opportunity of retaliation. The smallest coin in general circulation is a nickel one; the half-piastre, called by them *petit piastre*. Intrinsically it is worth a fraction over a penny, but the purchasing value corresponds to our half-penny, which at once opens up a dismal financial prospect; in other words, you pay about double as much there for things as you would at home.

Once I met with a singular instance of magnanimity, contrasting so strangely with the prevalent grasping spirit that I venture to relate it, in spite of its apparent triviality. One evening after visiting the Doctor in his rural

## Cairo again

retreat, I had strolled back to the giddy vortex of the city, a matter of two miles or so, and found myself destitute save for two and a half piastres. A couple of public holidays had followed on a Sunday, during which length of days the Bank remained relentlessly closed; hence my unenviable condition. Now that sum would procure, in one of the less reputable, more squalid eating-houses, a substantial plate of macaroni with an alluring blob of red juice on the top, and a pretty useful chunk of bread. It was also the exact price of a large-sized mug of ale, including tip to the waiter. There arose the delicate question which. The matter was a very grave one, as it would be fifteen hours before the bank reopened, and I hadn't fed since breakfast. I felt incapable of making so momentous a choice unaided, so left it to the spin of one of the precious coins. It decided in favour of macaroni, but I wisely reversed the decision—for after all beer is meat and drink—and light-heartedly made for the nearest decent café. After a slow, deliberate process of absorption, I lingered long and lovingly over the empty glass in regretful meditation, then, steeling my heart, called the waiter and stood up to deliver over my all. In doing so, I knocked over the glass. It flew into a thousand

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fragments on the pavement, with a sound that smote my soul like a death-knell. I was filled with shame and horror. The place was crowded, there would be a scene. I fancied the throng of faces around me, distorted and grown to a phenomenal size, were already beginning to mock and jeer. I couldn't pay for the damage; I should have to explain where I lived; it wouldn't be believed; perhaps the police . . . I handed him the money, and in mute interrogation, pointed to the condemning debris.

"*Ça ne fait rien!*" he said, with a shrug, thanked me for his penny and went off.

Physically, I suppose, I had been in more alarming situations, but I have never suffered such an agony of sickening fear.

As in all other cities, cinematograph theatres were very plentiful. These living pictures seem somehow to have a great attraction for those just returned from a sojourn in the wide spaces, in the back of beyond, and one frequently attended them. It was a little disgusting, though, to find that after a year or two things were no longer the same; either public taste had changed, or else the appetite of Cairo was so peculiarly vitiated that it had to be specially catered for. The "thumbs down" spirit of olden days strongly permeated the scenatorium.



## Cairo again

The spectators had paid their twopence, their threepence or their sixpence, as the case might be, and they had paid it to see blood, red blood, and lots of it. The old conventional, comic pieces—preceded by a short notice stating, to avoid any mistake, that they were comic—were no more. No longer did the harassed young man, frantically gesticulating, employ a dozen ridiculous and unsuccessful artifices to slay his mother-in-law. The venial theft, the view halloo, the chase, the fast-gathering field with its dashes into stalls, milk-carts, egg-baskets, the continual corners with a collision and rough and tumble around each, the hundred and one absurd mishaps, and the final collapse of a crowded roof through several stories on to the honeymoon couple below. All that was missing. Instead there was terrible melodrama, a succession of ghastly murders, horribly sudden deaths, people weltering in pools of their own and their victims' blood, madhouses and so on. As soon as a delicate, refined lady of rare beauty flittered on to the screen, I found myself unconsciously laying odds whether she was going to be the murderess or the murdered—but she invariably fulfilled the dual role. When a happy-looking man and wife appeared, it was inevitable that one or both were going to prove unfaithful, and one could only sit

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in silent anguish, earnestly hoping for a reconciliation; but alas! it was a practical certainty that the scene would close with the blood of both involving that of the third, and perhaps a fourth and fifth party. Every business man kept a loaded revolver in his right-hand drawer, for the express purpose of committing suicide. A few, very few, were permitted to die in their beds, but they had usually undergone a pretty rough handling first, and invariably had a startling confession to make—hence the concession. The tragedy nearly always took place in a ball-room, right in the heart of a gay and glittering throng of lords, ladies, guards, and blackguards; or else it was in some lonely, deserted spot—a family vault for choice—that the dire deed was done. Between these two sites there seemed to be no unhappy medium.

There was one very popular piece, which I often saw with slight variations. It opens with the grimly respectable home of a poor but *very* honest family—the impression of extreme honesty is indefinably conveyed. There are the good mother and father, the beautiful daughter and the small sister—the last a horrid little prig. Alas, one day the beautiful daughter disappears! She has fallen a victim to the seductions of a wealthy Marquis. Our hearts are wrung with a glimpse

## Cairo again

of the desolate home. Next we see the beautiful daughter, exquisitely dressed, in her new surroundings. You can't help rather liking the Marquis, though you know quite well he shouldn't have done it—the desolate home too! All goes well for a while. The beautiful daughter gives an enormous At-Home. Good Father, having discovered her whereabouts through little sister's diligence, forces his way in, and takes this opportunity of falling dead at her feet with rolling eyes and protruding tongue—he couldn't get his collar undone in time. On receipt of the sad news, poor Mother refuses to live any longer. Little sister enters a convent. Meanwhile the At-Home was such a costly affair that the Marquis is ruined—broke to the world. As beautiful daughter sails out of the door with a disdainful smile, you see the flash of the Marquis' pistol. She goes off to an actor she's been rather fond of lately. He is delighted to see her. And so she goes on; having exhausted the resources of one lover, she daintily steps over his bleeding corpse to the next, always sinking a little in the social scale. After a long series of harrowing scenes, we see her, dressed in tinsel, dancing in the very lowest of cafés chantants. There is a sudden uproar, and she is taken off by the police—one doesn't know why exactly. The

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magistrate is adamant; she is put into a penitentiary, still in tinsel. The other naughty girls crowd around and tease her. Here she distinguishes herself by unprovokedly scragging the Mother Superior—a sweet, dignified old lady. One feels it was bad form. Suddenly she falls ill. We see her tortured and writhing—a sight so revolting that it should not be allowed as a public entertainment. She sees in a delirious vision all the stages of her past life. Such is the ingenuity of modern science that we can see the vision too. The happy home, same desolate, her Father's death, the Marquis, her other friends, right down to her present position. She feels a light, cool touch on her brow; the Mother Superior is bending over her, with scratches distinctly visible on her face. This is the critical point; on recovery perhaps she becomes a good girl and takes to nursing. A cholera epidemic breaks out—the other nurses flee—she alone stands fast. We see her alone at midnight, in a ward where the occupants of endless rows of beds are twisted and convulsed in the last awful death agonies. This is the popular version. The fatal malady seizes her—more writhing and contortions. The tormented spirit escapes with a jerk. The President, surrounded by the other nurses, who have conveniently come back, pins

## Cairo again

the cross of the Legion over the brave still heart. In the other, and rightly less popular version, she goes back to her old ways, sinks a little lower, and finally jumps into the river on a cold night.

This is the sort of thing that delights the simple citizens. Once while I was enduring the first version of the above-described drama, an Italian mother with three children, all seemingly less than ten years old, were sitting immediately behind me. At the ghastly conclusion, the mother exclaimed joyously, "*Che bello!*" "*Si, si, molto, molto bello,*" ecstatically echoed those three little monsters, who ought long since to have been in bed.

The superficial manifestations of patriotic enthusiasm were also rather astonishing. One night we were shown some reviews. The descendants of Alexander's hosts, a rabble of undersized, untidy little men, with swords and rifles all awry, shuffled past, while staff and cavalry officers sat like caricatures of horsemen. Their compatriots in the house burst into a perfect frenzy of cheering. Other nationalities greeted their respective protectors with almost equal warmth. Lastly came an English review. The steady march of disciplined, stalwart infantry, swords and rifles held with easy grace

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and precision; the charge of the squadrons in splendid line, led by men who knew how to ride; the wild whirl of the superb horse-gunners—these indeed were things to move a sluggish pulse. But though there were many English people present, not one so far forgot himself as to display the slightest sign of emotion.

My last few days in Cairo were very uneventful. I used to spend some time up in the Citadel. It was there that Sultan Mohammed Ali, who had taken a dislike to the Mamelukes, managed to rid himself of them by an ingenious stratagem. He invited them one afternoon to a tea-party, and they were killed one by one as they unsuspectingly rode in through the gate. There is a legend that one, seeing his doom, jammed in his spurs, dashed through the courtyard, put his horse at the parapet, and leapt over into the dizzy abyss. The gallant horse lay shattered, but the Mameluke, so they say, dragged himself half a mile before death overtook him. The visitor is shown the place of this despairing leap. Though now all silted up with earth and sand below, it is still so deep that the heart misses a beat as one looks over.

Meanwhile the Doctor was beginning to take notice again. Silent-footed, gentle nurses

## Cairo again

tended him and ministered to his wants night and day. So enchanted was he with the natural beauty of his surroundings, that he showed no anxiety to leave them ; which was well, since the idea could not be entertained for at least another ten days. The Expedition took a touching farewell of him, and proceeded to occupy Alexandria.

## CHAPTER VII

### ALEXANDRIA

**T**HIS journey was undertaken in the same manner as the previous ones, in that manner no longer regarded in the light of an amusing novelty, but a hideous necessity. The line between those two greatest towns of Egypt is naturally a much-used one, and I was not surprised to see a few whitish faces in my compartment. As usual the train was crowded. Those four hours would have been very dull, had it not been for the vagaries of a stout, short, elderly lady, with wrinkled russet face. She had a scolding, metallic, penetrating voice, which she was employing to its utmost effective power on a great lumpish lout of a man some seats away. What the relationship between them was, and what were the rights and wrongs of the case, I shall never know. My ignorance of Arabic, too, robbed the episode of its most poignant phrases. She nagged on and on unceasingly, until at last,



## Alexandria

exasperated beyond endurance, the man got up and chased her down the crowded carriage with an umbrella. To my extreme embarrassment, she made for me, and clutched hold of my coat, crying, I supposed, for protection. My sympathies were with the man then, and they always will be; so it was with a heavy heart that I arose and dealt the blow of chivalry; not without misgivings, too, that the onlookers would turn and rend me, or that the lady herself, true to the noblest traditions of our own slumland domestic brawling, would set on me tooth and nail. However, these fears were totally ungrounded, for the people remained more stolidly indifferent than ever, and the lady busied herself jumping on the middle of her fallen foe.

I also was privileged to see the reverse of the medal; the contrast to these savage, angry passions. Right before me, on the opposite seat, was being enacted a little scene which, though nauseating to me, yet illustrated the most pleasing trait of Oriental character—the great affection of parents for their little ones. A young father sat with a child on either knee; on the parallel seat across the carriage was the mother with two more children. The stork was again hovering over their roof-tree. The father noisily kissed each child all over its face,

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passed it back to the mother and received another in its place, upon which he repeated the process, and so it went on throughout the journey with the regularity of some mechanical contrivance.

My host of the Cairo hostel had recommended me an excellent hotel in Alexandria, kept by a Greek, a personal friend of his, and patronised exclusively by Europeans, while the charges were little higher than his own. I was dragging my suit-case out of the train, when a short, thick-set Copt came straight up, as if he had been expecting me. "You are going to a hotel," he said, as though stating a fact. "You have guessed my secret," I answered gravely. Then conversation languished for a moment. I rather liked the look of him; he wore an ordinary suit of dark clothes, neat but incredibly darned and threadbare. He had an open, honest face, with a wistful expression on it. Trade was evidently bad. I agreed to the suggestion that he should accompany me to the hotel, for I feared it was more than probable they would understand there no civilised language. This indeed turned out to be the case. The "hotel" was one flat of a building in the square Mohammed Ali; above it were other "hotels," below, a barber's shop.

## Alexandria

The landlord, to whom I bore a letter of introduction, was out, and we were received by a squat, bull-necked, bull-headed woman with a tiny querulous treble voice—an uncanny combination—who showed no particular enthusiasm about taking me in. However, my new friend so skilfully conducted the negotiations that I was soon ushered into a really nice room, with large windows, fairly civilised furniture and two beds. My mentor made himself quite at home, sat down in the best chair and told me the latest news of the great world, and a few interesting domestic details of his own menage. He was, he said, married to an Italian lady of high birth, with whom he lived in perfect felicity; his distaste for blacks was so strong that he could never have allied himself to one, however beautiful. His name was Ibrahim, which is beyond all doubt the way in which “our forefather and his seed for ever” spelled and pronounced it. After a while he took a shilling and his departure, promising faithfully, though unasked, to return at four o’clock to the moment, and so left me to ablutions and repose.

As I lay reflecting, my languidly roving eye was arrested by a printed card of regulations nailed to the wall near the door. The idea

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of an establishment like that boasting a code of rules so tickled my humour that I got up once and went over to learn how I must frame my conduct. Most of the articles were nothing more than a classification of those who had to pay in advance for their room; married couples without luggage; bachelors in like uncomfortable circumstances, and so on. The Management also reserved to themselves the right of ejecting visitors who were guilty of unseemly noise or tumult—hence, no doubt, the bull-built wife. They concluded with—

### *Art. 9.*

Mms. les voyageurs sont priés de ne pas se promener demi-nus.

On the stroke of four Abraham appeared, politely knocking on the door as he opened it. Spying my pouch on the table, he immediately began trying to roll a cigarette from its contents. I silently watched this effort, foredoomed to failure. A look of mingled disappointment and contempt slowly spread over his face. I threw him an old, old choked-up pipe which had been following me about for some months. He seized it eagerly, drew a cigarette from his pocket, removed the paper

## Alexandria

and crammed the tobacco into its narrowed bowl. In spite of his distaste for "blacks" he was a thorough Oriental, through and through. Disgusted with the fickleness of Lady Nicotine, he turned his attention to my affairs. "How long are you going to stay here?" he asked. I told him I didn't know. "Where are you going next?" I said I was going to Constantinople. "You can't," he cried. "The Dardanelles are closed." That was a facer. Of course I knew perfectly well the Dardanelles were closed; in fact I rather prided myself on my knowledge of international affairs, and had often pointed out to anyone I could get to listen, the immense losses to shipping, the menace of an allied naval base, and various other remote contingencies of that war; but I had always looked at it in a detached sort of way, as though it were simply an abstract proposition—and between theory and practice there is a great gulf fixed. It had never occurred to me for a single instant that any one would stop me going through the Dardanelles if I wanted to. I didn't mind in the least where I went, but it was a dreadful blow to one's dignity. War is very terrible. One studied the Dock Strike as an interesting social problem in the same impersonally philosophic manner

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until one's own boxes were held up in it. Then one became bitter.

"Where am I going, then, Abraham?" I asked brokenly.

"Jerusalem," he answered without a moment's hesitation. I raised myself on an elbow, and looked at him sharply; yes, he was quite serious. So Jerusalem it was. It was decided that we should find out about the sailings thither next day, and meanwhile go sight-seeing. We started at once. Abraham led me straight to a café, where he seemed to be well known, and ordered some nourishment.

"Hallo," I said; "what about the sights?"

Abraham looked at me knowingly. "There aren't any sights," he said, and applied himself to the business on hand. This was soothing to the conscience; I knew it wasn't exactly true, but I didn't want to see any sights; there was bound to be a lot of that sort of thing at Jerusalem, and here the lazy, purring Mediterranean, with its diversely peopled shore was good enough for me. When Abraham was completely refreshed, and I had paid, he put me on the top of an electric tram, and sent me off to San Stefano.

It takes about half an hour to get to the Ramleh Casino. All the time, at each stopping-place, a crowd of every sort and condition gets

## Alexandria

in and out, lending a perpetual interest to this run, which the cool fresh breeze off the sea alone would make sufficiently attractive. Out there are the suburbs, where such people as can afford to, live. Apart from its exceptional climatic conditions, one is inclined to describe Alexandria and its environs as a highly respectable seaside resort of the meaner kind. The cafés on the beach, the minstrels, the places of entertainment, are all so shabby and second-rate. But it has this one great advantage, there is room for every one on the shore. You can find a whole rock to yourself, and even a dingle for quiet, undisturbed rest. Moreover, the facilities of delightful bathing from the sandier parts of the beach compensate for many deficiencies. I remained out there till darkness fell, then, after a simple meal at the most modest albergo to be found, returned quite weary to my sumptuous hotel.

Having got into bed, I was just about to blow out the candle when the door opened and a young man entered. He was below middle height, coarsely handsome, flashily dressed in a cheap sort of way, and reeked of some foul scent. I judged he was Greek. He shut the door, locked it, then, looking neither to his right nor his left, marched straight on the window,

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which he closed with the utmost care and deliberation, first the outside shutters, then the window itself, and, finally, the heavy curtains. I lay staring in speechless astonishment. After satisfying himself that no particle of fresh air could by any mischance get into the room, he turned away and began to take off his clothes. Then I grasped the situation. The Management was not of that order to put two beds in one room solely for the sake of adornment. This young man was one of those that have to pay in advance. Our eyes met in a suspicious glare; it was obvious he mistrusted me more than I did him; perhaps he thought I coveted his diamond necktie. He removed his coat, waistcoat, shirt and shoes; that was all; but the unbuttoning of his shirt caused me another serious disappointment for beneath was a brilliant football of iridescent hues. I am afraid I must have been staring in the rudest fashion, for his nose twitched and his lips suddenly curled up at the corners, baring his teeth in a mute snarl, like that of a caged tiger or leopard. Then he put out his light and went to sleep. The thick, nauseous, almost tangible odour of that poisonous scent heavily oppressed me through the night; even after I had quietly opened the window. At last I fell into a



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drugged stupor. With the morning he had vanished, and so had my safety tie-pin, the only relic of better days.

It was Monday. Abraham, after a half-hearted protestation of sympathy for my misfortunes, and a promise to solicit Io for solitary confinement on my behalf in future, announced that a boat was sailing for Jaffa on Wednesday evening. He took it for granted that I should be going steerage, but he didn't depict the attractions of that method of travel in any too glowing colours. I gathered that he himself would not dream of it for a moment, but then he must have been very fastidious, as he had only left Alexandria once in his life—on a two-day excursion to Cairo. We took our way leisurely to the shipping office. Outside I felt an absurd disinclination to go and ask for a steerage ticket, so deputed Abraham to the uncongenial transaction. Indeed he had intended to do it in any case, for it appeared he received a small percentage commission on every victim he lured to the purchase of a ticket. I was now to have some further insight into the inconvenience of travelling in poverty. I loitered about for nearly two hours before Abraham reappeared with a beaming smile. "Fixed it up all right?" I asked. "No. Gentleman says come again at

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same time to-morrow," was the cheery answer. I didn't see what there was to smile at, but Abraham evidently thought this mode of business nothing out of the ordinary.

So another day was passed divided between the top of a tram and the translucent waves. Next day was a glorious one, blue skies, blue seas and a cool, soft radiance over everything. No one could be unkind on such a day. Our hearts bounded with hope and confidence as we made our second attempt upon the office. It met with precisely the same result. I was tired of the tops of trams, so trudged out to Aboukir, to gaze on the scene of Nelson's and Abercrombie's victories. The third morning, of course, there could be no question about getting the ticket, at least so I thought, and my annoyance can be imagined when Abraham came out after the usual two hours' wait and said we had to come again in the afternoon. The boat was scheduled to sail at four. It still wanted an hour till the midday closure, so I put aside my diffidence and went up myself, meaning to see the thing settled this time. I had expected a great pressure of business, but there were no clients there at all; there was no reason whatever why the ticket should not have been given. A nice-looking youngster

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with a rather weak, delicate face held sway in the office. Perhaps a foreign climate had reacted on his nerves, making him irritable; perhaps he was overworked; or perhaps he was just of a cantankerous disposition—one cannot say; but as soon as we came in he began shouting at me, in a high-pitched, peevish voice, that I should not take a native's word before a white man's. I told him gently that I had not come there to quarrel with him, life had sorrows enough without that, and begged him to let me have my ticket and be gone. Abraham fancied relations were at high tension; it was a situation dear to the Oriental heart—two white men up against each other, mainly through his instrumentality. He yelled some Arabic at the clerk in an insulting tone, and was surprised to find himself sharply silenced. The boy then gave me the ticket without another word, and we departed. When we had gained the street, I told Abraham pretty plainly that he, and he alone, must have caused all the delay by his cursed incivility. He, however, hotly denied the accusation, saying that he wasn't such a fool as to risk his commission on my ticket by wantonly annoying the company's officials. That argument was unanswerable, so we let the matter drop, and I lectured him on

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the value of words for his future guidance as we walked along.

"My son," I said—he was not more than fifteen years older than I—"remember that of all weapons the silver tongue is most effective, provided that it has the mailed fist behind it. Harsh, angry words are also not unavailing, if backed by the same element; without it they are useless, whereas soft words alone may produce some result." I became enamoured of my theme, and continued: "Words mean so little; words mean so much. One hasty, unmeant word will wreck a happy home, sunder those whom God hath joined together, shatter the friendship built up through long years on the foundation of a thousand unselfish acts of mutual kindness. The tongue is sharper than the sword. Guard then that of thine, my son."

Abraham said he thought perhaps I was right—the English are so clever.

We now occupied ourselves with laying in provisions for the voyage. The cost of the ticket to Jaffa was about ten shillings; but it included no food or drink, so the traveller had to make his own arrangements for that two and a half days as best he could. I felt justified in doing myself pretty well on this inauspicious

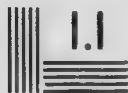
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occasion, and we spared no expense in assuring the success and comfort of the trip. First a deck chair was procured for three francs after prolonged bargaining, Abraham accepting a trifling honorarium from the shopkeeper in return for bringing custom—then we scoured the bazaar for a suitable blanket, finally choosing a thick brown horse-rug of moderate price. So much for the external man, now for the inner. Abraham strongly advised only such commodities as could be stowed about the person—figs, dates and the like—other kinds, he feared, would be stolen while one slept. I ventured to hope, however, that he took too gloomy a view of the situation; he himself had never travelled, and could therefore only judge fellow-man by himself. Taking only those dried fruits which he suggested would have been false economy, for such is their well-known thirst-producing propensity that they would have necessitated a correspondingly larger quantity of liquid matter. I therefore took a firm line and superintended the purchase of six loaves, a dozen oranges, and an enormous slab of pale cheese with holes in it. To drink, we bought a huge bottle of wine, which cost only one franc. The bottle was one of the slender-necked, bulbous-bodied Italian kind, enclosed in



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basket work; it was well worth the franc, but its content was obviously water, which had been put to soak for a few days in an empty cask. The advantage of this beverage was that there would be no temptation to exceed, or even to drink at all until driven to it by the extreme pangs of thirst. It bid fair therefore to last the voyage out. A small bottle of brandy for snake-bites completed the commissariat.

In due course we arrived at the harbour by tram. Everything there was made as difficult as possible for us ladies and gentlemen of the steerage. We were herded like cattle through a series of pens. At the entrance of each was an official of either the Government or the shipping line, who had a rough word for each of us. I imagined, perhaps mistakenly, that they were ruder to me than the others. After an age I reached a pigeon-hole, with a swarthy young man behind it, whose duty it was to examine tickets and register the travellers' names. Either through a desire to practice English, curiosity, or the joy of seeing a white man "down," he made himself particularly offensive. At last I was shoved along from there and found myself before an old, wizened gentleman in fez and spectacles, who looked absurdly like a crow. As he stood blinking at



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me, a taller little policeman, reaching about up to my waist, uttering the words "must take off hat to doctor" stood on tip-toe and knocked mine off.

After that I was allowed to enter a small boat, wherein Abraham and my belongings were already established, and without more ado we rowed off to the ship, which was anchored out in the harbour.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE VOYAGE TO JAFFA

**W**E slowly approached the ship. It looked a very ordinary one of the Mediterranean combined cargo-passenger type; there was nothing about it then to suggest that it was going to be indelibly stamped on the memory for all time. The usual clangour and confusion of loading, clothed it, as it were, in a thick discordant garment. We pushed our way through a swarm of noisy small craft to the foot of a companion ladder which led up to a black cavernous opening in the side of the ship. As we ascended, a sheaf of rails being hoisted by a crane suddenly tilted, slipped and swung against the iron side, not a foot off our heads, with a clash that set every nerve aquiver. We stepped through the sombre aperture into the Cimmerian gloom beyond.

“Here,” said Abraham, “is your place.”

The term “steerage,” then, was a misnomer

## The Voyage to Jaffa

at least as far as that line was concerned. The portion allotted to us was near the middle of the ship, below the deck, on a level with the cabins. Immediately above was the hatch, and occupying almost the whole of our space, the corresponding hatch, through our floor to the cargo-hold below. The hold was already filled, so the overhead hatch had been closed to prevent our fragrance rising to the first-class deck, and to spare its passengers of delicate sensibility the unpleasantness of seeing us human litter below. An eager crowd stood around our still open hatch, waiting for the covering boards to be replaced, when they would scramble for a place on it, for—Abraham explained—it was more airy than the floor. Having put my chair and properties alongside it too, I turned to bid Abraham good-bye, considering in my mind the question of his gratuity for doing nothing but live at my expense for five days. He had assumed the sullen, injured expression ever present on these occasions. I knew well that whatever he got he would indignantly demand five times the amount, so I proffered him a franc with a gracious and final air. He feigned innocent surprise and wanted to know what it was for; and so the farce was solemnly played out up to five francs. When he realised that

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this indeed was the limit, *rien ne va plus*, the discontent vanished from his face, he wished me a jolly voyage and declared he would certainly come and meet me on the way back. A hearty handshake and he was gone. Then I turned my attention to my surroundings.

By the time we sailed my eyes had become sufficiently accustomed to the dim light to make things out fairly clearly. It was a great relief to notice that, except on the hatchway, there was ample room for all. The company provided sleeping boards for the convenience of a limited number of travellers. These consisted of three rough planks, joined together by a crosspiece near each end, which also served to raise the sleeper a few inches off the floor—a very desirable precaution, as one saw subsequently. The hole through which we had come on board and a similar one on the other side had been almost closed on starting; we could get just a peep of the sea through them on either side, that was all—no sky, no air.

The people were of many kinds, mean whites, Levantines, Turks, Arabs, but more Jews than anything else. There was one large family, Italian I think, seemingly in desperate straits, for the swarm of children were unwashed, almost unclothed, devoid of every

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decency. Yet they had more than enough to eat. As in the trains, all these people had large bundles and baggages with them, not one was without filthy rags of some kind for his bedding. All were continually eating, too, and had cooking utensils in which they boiled coffee, tea, vegetables and even meat. Down each side of our prison ran a drain, about four inches deep, choked and half full of refuse when we started; its tide gradually rose, swelled with dregs and broken meats, as we proceeded, while the floor too was rapidly becoming strewn with horrid remnants of repasts. Over on the far side, a Syrian had two cages full of parrots; these birds strove, with their inane, piercing shrieks, to gain predominance over the ceaseless strains of a gramophone wheezing out with maddening repetition the only tune known in that part of the world, called, I think, "John Keener." Every moment the atmosphere became more suffocating. The Jews afforded some entertainment. Almost without exception they wore beards, matted with filth, love-locks and long black sort of frock-coats. They were intensely religious, and kept collecting in one corner for prayers. While thus engaged, they wound what seemed to be a black tape around their left arms. One, taller, a little

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less dirty, and more holy than the rest, came down frequently from the second class to hold service. At daylight he appeared in a black and white striped blanket, with silver embroidered edges, thrown over his head and shoulders, and easily outlasted the others in devotion. Long after they had sunk down exhausted he continued, and finally worked himself up into a kind of religious ecstasy, rocking convulsively to and fro, chanting, moaning and gesticulating. When he had finished, his eyes wore a dazed look, and there was a thick foam on his lips and beard. None of the other passengers displayed the slightest interest in this performance, or, for the matter of that, in anybody or anything outside their own affairs; doubtless the perpetual problem of their own daily bread absorbed the whole of their attention.

We arrived at Port Said early in the morning. I hastened ashore for a breath of pure air, and on my return found that hordes and hordes of Arabs had come on board. My cigarettes, bread, oranges, all provisions except the medicinal brandy, had gone. One could not have eaten in that atmosphere, so it didn't matter. The scene had changed now. It was all one confused seething mass of bundles,

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garbage and human forms, male and female, in every conceivable attitude, and so thick that in places they seemed to be piled on top of each other. All as usual were eating, smoking and spitting. It was like some hideous nightmare. It was only by brute force that I could clear a space for my tiny chair. The foul drains down the side were more than full; every time the ship lurched ever so slightly their contents overflowed and divided into sluggish, nacreous streams which went crawling in among the recumbent forms like loathsome creeping things, till absorbed by bedding or garments. It was good to have a chair raised off that filthy level. Soon the haze of nargila smoke mercifully obscured all details beyond my immediate vicinity. Next to me lay wallowing an ebony-black, toothless, hairless, grinning old Mumbo-Jumbo, clad in less than a pocket-handkerchief—more grotesque than any gargoyle of Notre Dame. Some way on groaned a poor wretch whose features had almost gone, his face all raw and ravaged by a dire disease. Over all buzzed a thick, dark cloud of man-eating flies. On my left was a Turk, and his stalwart little son, about four years old, dressed in the characteristic baggy blue trousers, pendulous at the seat, with bright waist

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cloth. The little lad was a tremendous swash-buckler; spoke to his father as man to man and smoked a quantity of cigarettes. But "now" (I am copying this from the fly-leaf of a novel on which I jotted impressions at the time) "the little chap is huddled up on a heap of foully saturated rags, fast asleep, the hollows of his eyes completely filled with solid, black, vibrating masses of flies." Once for a second a ghastly fear gripped me that I was dead, that this was inferno; that it would go on for ever—no escape. I pinched the back of my hand till it bled. Spirits don't bleed, so that was all right. Much relieved, I then found some distraction by breaking in a young pipe—own brother to that which had perished so allantly in the Nile.

Towards evening, the human litter had sorted itself to some extent. Near by a party of Arabs squatted around a large brass tray, in the centre of which was a little brazier; each produced from his bundle some culinary requisite, and soon they were enjoying a savoury curry, dipping their fingers into the bowl by turn. All round, on innumerable lamps, the inevitable coffee was being prepared. Its pungent smell, faintly penetrating the dense palpable pall of conglomerated noisome odours that enveloped us,



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was the only pleasant feature of that voyage. As soon as darkness fell, I applied myself resolutely to my little bottle of neat brandy, partly in the hope of its acting as a soporific and partly because I liked the taste. That trip would be a sovereign remedy for nerves. No one had the slightest consideration for any one else; throughout the night, if a man wanted to shout he shouted; if he wanted to hammer—which for some occult reason many did; one could not see *what* they were hammering—he hammered; if to walk he walked, though his path lay over the upturned faces of his fellow man and woman. No one ever seemed to resent these liberties.

All things considered, I managed to pass a wonderfully good night up till about four o'clock; then there arose such a babel and hubbub that further sleep or dozing was entirely out of the question. People were beginning to tie up their bundles and bedding, and generally get their belongings together. I felt far blacker than old Mumbo-Jumbo at my side, so, with the utmost difficulty, slipping on the inexpressible, slimy floor whenever my foot touched it, I struggled, fought and stumbled my way over to a pump on the opposite side. Before I had got my head well under it I was seen by

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one of the crew, who roughly drove me away; it was drinking water, he said; necessities only, not luxuries, were provided for us.

Soon we began to draw near Jaffa. Crowds swarmed to the aperture, fighting for a glimpse of the approaching town, shutting out what little air we might otherwise have got. Presently the crew beat off this surging throng around the aperture, swung back its iron doors and roped off a passage for the first and second-class passengers, as all had to disembark from there. I unobtrusively slipped under the rope and hid myself among them, thus for good and all severing connection with my former travelling companions. The journey was short, the weather cool and the waters still. The imagination shudderingly recoils from picturing that same scene on a protracted voyage in hot and stormy seas.

The water is so shallow off Jaffa that vessels of any size have to anchor some way out, and one goes ashore in rowing boats. A flotilla of these lay waiting for us. As soon as the gangway was lowered, an indescribable pandemonium was let loose on us; a swarm of yelling furies rushed up, hurled one hither and thither, and fought each other and oneself for one's own luggage. Words are powerless to depict the

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deafening hurly-burly. Prominent among them were a number of huge ruffians in red jerseys bearing the word "Cook's" in large white letters. These hired assassins were obviously recruited for their great physique and brutality. One clawed me by the arm, another grabbed my poor suit-case. As I protested forcibly against the outrage, a posse of their confederates closed in, seized me and flung me neck and crop into their boat below. I was rejoiced to see that the other passengers met with no more ceremony. When they had caught as many as the boat could hold, each took an oar, and we set off for the shore, passing en route through a narrow rocky channel, said to be very dangerous in rough weather. One was now able to take a leisurely survey of the town, the scene of so many historical incidents, from Peter's vision to the darkest stain on Napoleon's sword, namely the massacre of the prisoners and poisoning of his own sick and wounded—both necessary though gruesome acts. Its orange groves form a restful speck of cool dark green set in that arid shore. As I was gazing, an alert Syrian gentleman squashed in alongside and told me I was going to a certain hotel in Jerusalem, where at that time of year they took riff-raff for six shillings a day. He was not, of course, so discourteous

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as to put it in exactly those words. I acquiesced apathetically: but I didn't really believe that I should ever sit down before glass and napery, see clean foods, or handle knife and fork again; it seemed so very long ago since I had done any of those things.

Two poor old dowdy German-American sisters, with faded, colourless faces, grey beyond all measure of the years, sat beside me in the boat and occasionally addressed to me some plaintive whimperings. They were missionaries, and had travelled over the whole globe, yet every moment they made anew the discovery, with fresh lamentations, that Man is deceitful and rapacious. After a long whispered consultation, they, too, had yielded to the blandishments of my alert friend, and were destined for the same hotel. I amused myself speculating which might be the elder, but it was not within the genius of man to say. One had a small black bag, from which she made with pathetic reluctance all the necessary payments. This was circumstantial evidence and the odds were heavily on her, till the other opened a precisely similar bag, displaying their provisions—some stale fragments of bread and a broken slab of mildewed chocolate. Which was the senior office? Keeper of the Purse or Chief of

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the Commissariat? I abandoned the hopeless problem.

Our landing was successfully effected, but we had four hours to wait for the train, and our captor suggested we should pass it at a hotel which, as it were, reciprocated with his at Jerusalem. This hotel went by the sinister name of "Hardeggs." The old ladies held another lengthy whispered consultation—they never committed themselves to the most trivial decision without this whispered consultation—and agreed to repose and lunch there. They inflexibly declined a carriage, so I was constituted porter, and we crawled together up the hill.

I found nothing of remarkable interest in Jaffa; it was exactly like other small Eastern towns. Hardeggs Hotel was as crude as the name had led one to expect. There I earned the everlasting hatred of one of the old ladies and the undying love of the other. At lunch an omelette was put in front of me to serve; I absent-mindedly gave one a portion perceptibly larger than the other; instantly ominous catlike growling arose; their plates were placed side by side, and the portions minutely adjusted. Throughout the rail journey the injured one regarded me with the ghost of a baneful gleam in her dull, dead eyes, while I detected a great

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tenderness in those of the other. For my part, that meal was not a success. I ate in a hurried, guilty, furtive sort of way, haunted by the fear that the sailor who had hunted me away from the pump would again appear and drive me from the table. It is incredible now how strong that sensation was.

## CHAPTER IX

### JAFFA TO JERUSALEM

THE distance from Jaffa to Jerusalem is fifty-seven miles; the train takes just over four hours to do it, so one may judge that this line is not the last word in modern progress. It was originally constructed by a French company, but that would seem to have fallen out, as the engines, rolling stock, and everything else connected with it, are made in Berlin. The preponderance of the German element in all things there is very noticeable. Among other enterprises they carry on a flourishing trade in hardware, and they own nearly all the hotels and European shops.

On leaving Jaffa, the train quickly enters the Valley of Sharon, a name inseparably associated in the mind with roses; but none were anywhere to be seen. Instead, our track lay through wide rolling plains of pasture land, with here and there some cultivation and

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occasional groves of trees, affording a panoramic demonstration of the sources from which emanates the country's wealth—silk, olives, wine and grain being its principal produce.

Soon we come into the one-time land of the Philistines; from there the character of the country slowly changes. At first smooth, rounded hillocks begin to rise gently out of the soft hollows; gradually their aspect becomes more irregular and abrupt, till they slope sharply up to that wild, rocky, jagged range, the "Mountains of Judæa."

Few localities have formed so continual a battlefield as this; oceans of blood lie sunk beneath its now smiling surface. Indeed, the terrain is such as to thrill the soldier-heart, so perfectly is it adapted to defence, surprises, counter-attacks and all the varying wiles of war, and one is not surprised that it was there the fate of Jerusalem was so often contested. In the days of remotest antiquity, the tribes which dwelt thereabout were perpetually engaged in internecine strife. Then the Scythians and, later, the Assyrians, broke through it more times than history can relate with any certainty. It was, too, the scene of David's victory over the Philistines. The chariots of the Pharaohs and the Persians



## Jaffa to Jerusalem

likewise overran it in their turn. Then Vespasian's legions, under Titus, marched triumphant over that bloody ground, and a little while later, after three years' stubborn resistance at Bether, just through the precipitous ravine, five hundred and eighty thousand followers of the fanatical rebel, Barcochebas, Son of a Star, met their death at the point of Hadrian's swords, and the Roman horses stood up to their girths in blood. Then for three hundred years an unwonted peace reigned on that stormy stage, until the Persian Chosroes whirled over it again, followed shortly afterwards by Heraclius. Next, the fierce irresistible tide of conquering Islam swept over it and on up to the walls of the city, which its hot waves rapidly submerged. Four centuries later the long series of crusades began, and there was incessant fighting for two hundred years, more often among the Crusaders themselves for spoil and territory than against the Infidel—for as soon as these warriors arrived, after incredible hardships, on this Holy Land itself, many seemed to forget the noble impulse that had urged them there.

About this same little space—on which the tourist gazes through the window with indifferent eye, because it lacks concrete commemorations—fought those great knights whose names stand

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highest on the roll of chivalry: single-minded Godfrey de Bouillon; valiant Tancred, who will ever live in Tasso's immortal poem; mighty Bohemond; brave, weak Robert of England and Normandy; Count Raymond; Edgar Atheling, lawful heir to Britain; generous Hugh of Vermandois; and, in later days, Philip of France; false Conrad of Montserrat, and lion-hearted Richard, with whose name Arabian mothers still awe their infants to silence.

Still, as the train crawls on, you can see now and then piles of stones which were once their outpost forts. There is scarcely an ancient house of Europe whose arms do not bear some emblem of deeds done or sights seen there. And yet the irony! Of all the knights who fought there for their Faith, he whose name was never sullied by cruelty or baseness—though most provoked—in that age of treachery, he who shone forth as the beau ideal of Mediæval chivalry, *sans peur et sans reproche*, was the pagan, Saladin.

My reverie was suddenly dispelled by the greeting of a dark-complexioned, lanky individual, with aquiline features and keen, black eyes, who came in by the corridor. He said his name was Aboosh. I said I was sorry, for it didn't sound a pretty one. He disregarded my

## Jaffa to Jerusalem

sympathy, and quickly got to business in a strong American accent. Though Syrian-born, he had lived and learned his English there. He undertook to show me everything in and around Jerusalem for twenty-five shillings. I offered twenty. He thought for a moment, then agreed provided that I would ride to Bethlehem on a donkey instead of in a carriage. The deal was closed at that.

Shortly afterwards we drew into Jerusalem station. The first thing I saw on the platform was an extremely pretty girl ; it was unexpected there, and didn't seem right somehow. A moment later the old ladies and myself were collected and jealously shepherded into a carriage by the burly proprietor of our hotel ; his myrmidon at Jaffa had warned him by wire of our impending arrival and he came to meet the train in person, to make certain of his prey. As we rattled along the rough uneven road, he pointed out the sights and objects of interest. There, dominating all in gloomy superiority, the Temple area, comprising Mounts Sion and Moriah, still encircled by its massive wall, seemingly so impregnable that one marvelled how it could ever have been stormed. Down to the right, the Brook of Kedron and the Pool of Siloam—over yonder, the Valley of Jehoshaphat,

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the Field of Blood and the Mount of Olives. As we progressed, it was strange to see with one's own eyes those various places whose names are so deeply interwoven in the fabric of childhood's memories. Presently we turned sharply to the left, up the main street, containing shops, restaurants, banks, hotels and all the appurtenances of modern life. There was nothing now to suggest that this was the cradle whence went the gentle Word which for two hundred centuries has swayed and shaped the destinies of nations, which has brought peace to thousands of troubled, trusting hearts, which has deluged the Western world in blood.

The hotel was large, comfortable and clean ; but it was run on that objectionable system, happily now nearly extinct, where the proprietor is also, as it were, host. Entering any of the public rooms, you find him seated there, and he politely asks you to sit down and starts a conventional conversation. Such relations between the man with whom sooner or later you will have to contest the bill are far from desirable. My room looked across over green fields and olive groves to Bethlehem. In that still evening hour the prospect was ineffably serene. Again as my glance wandered between it and the snowy sheets on my bed, that weird feeling of unreality

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came over me. It was all so calm and quiet after those last few long days—could I really be going to sleep in a bed? Was it really I who stood here in Jerusalem, looking at Bethlehem? How one's friends would laugh!

The loud clash of the dinner gong suddenly recalled my thoughts to more material things. I went in a little shyly, for I still wore the faithful khaki outfit. There were only about six people there, all English and of the aggressively proper order; I wanted to cry out that at any rate my shirt and socks were clean, as they, with one exception, stared at me in grave disapproval. The exception sat alone at a little table, to which he imperiously beckoned me. To monomaniacs, bores and idiot-intellec[t]s I always fall an easy prey—perhaps it is some subtle bond of unity between kindred spirits. This kind old gentleman came under the first heading. His affliction was architecture, and all through the meal he kept producing from every pocket snapshots of his discoveries and pointing out their peculiarities to me. Once I ventured a would-be bright little interpellation, but found he was deaf, and I had to go on repeating it crescendo, while he listened, head inclined, hand to ear, till it must have been heard in Jericho. It is on occasions like this that we realise what miserably

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stupid remarks we are capable of making. Towards the end of dinner, when I was congratulating myself that escape was at hand, he asked me if I would care to see his photos of Palmyra. It was impossible to say no, so with sinking heart and perjured soul I declared that I should be delighted. We adjourned to the salon. While he went up to his room to fetch them, an elderly lady with penetrating eyes and incisive manner of speech tackled me; she quickly elicited the information that I had come from India; she savagely asked me if I had met her daughter there. I falteringly admitted that I had not; then with one eloquent, suspicious glance, which said more plainly than any words: "I know *your* sort! You don't impose on *me*! You've either never been to India at all, or else you're not in society—not to have heard of my daughter, indeed!" she swept out of the room just as my old friend tottered in under the weight of both arms piled high with albums and photos. God of battles! My thoughts turned longingly to the black hole of the ship again. The ordeal lasted over two hours; at the end I could, blindfolded, have led a party and shown it every remaining stone of superb Zenobia's capital. I adore ruins for their associations, the impression they produce and the romances that one can

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weave around them; but of the details and technicalities of their structure I know little and care nothing. I thanked the good old man for all his kindness and crept wearily off to bed, followed by his assurances of showing me more the next night.

## CHAPTER X

### BETHLEHEM AND JERUSALEM

**E**ARLY in the morning the Expedition set out for Bethlehem. Mr. Aboosh refrained from accompanying it in person, but sent one of his staff instead, whom I found waiting outside the hotel with a couple of donkeys. This individual was fat and of a surly mien; he was a native Christian, dressed in modern Syrian clothes, that is to say, fez, European coat and waistcoat, wide white cotton trousers gathered tight just above the ankle, no socks and patent leather shoes. Like his chief, he spoke English with a marked American accent, and his whole manner was a curious mixture of Western hustle and Oriental apathy. I took a dislike to him on sight, which increased when I became certain that his donkey was the better one, and it was, I believe, warmly reciprocated when I made him change. However, this ill-feeling was aroused to no purpose, for after about a



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mile and a half both animals were exhausted, and there was nothing for it but to sit down on the roadside and await events. There the rogue betrayed an exasperating though very common failing; when asked a question of which he obviously did not know the answer, he promptly invented. So many men in the civilised world are sufferers from the same complaint; they can rarely bear to confess ignorance to other men, and never to women or children, and thus any amount of erroneous information is disseminated. Also, the man addicted to the habit runs grave risk of being thought a fool by his questioner, if the latter doesn't happen to be one. Should you ever want precise information on any subject, never ask any one whom you can't be certain will know it, for if he doesn't the chances are that he will not have the courage to say those hateful words, "I don't know," but will tell you, as absolutely accurate, what *he thinks* it is. If some one were to turn around and call him a liar, he would be genuinely pained and surprised. This universal weakness may arise simply from natural vanity, but personally I have a theory—totally unsupported—that it is partly due to an educational system of examinations.

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We had not to wait long before a rattling, clattering cloud of dust came whirling down the road towards us at a fearful pace. When it was nearly abreast we were able to discern in the heart of it about the ricketiest fiacre I have ever seen. Harness and vehicle momentarily gave the apprehension of swift and sudden dissolution; they seemed to be held together entirely by frayed and knotted string. A most desperate whip, over whose shaven head not more than six summers could have passed, sat grinning on the box. *Faute de mieux*, we tied up our mokes in the shade and clambered in. Before our feet had left the ground, we were dashed off at break-neck speed, our impish Jehu hallooing and cracking his whip with might and main. It was a nerve-shattering experience. Either no rules of the road obtain there, or he observed none. The heartfelt maledictions of other carriage folk, riders and pedestrians echoed as a continuous refrain in our ears, all along our wild career.

Now that we were parted from the bone of our contention, my guide, philosopher and enemy became a little more communicative. He pointed out in a grudging reluctant sort of way those things which he felt ought to interest me; some old Crusader towers, a great

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rock on which some holy man, Jacob I think, once lay down to rest, leaving a deep impression of his form upon it; the well in which the Magi first saw reflected the Star of Bethlehem; Rachel's tomb—"Here," said my guide, "on her way to Bethlehem she got hard labour and laid Benjamin," as though that renowned person had been an egg. Over on the other side we saw the place where Ruth reaped, and the field where the shepherds watched their flocks by night.

At the end of about six miles, there is a sharp ascent into Bethlehem; having scaled this, one proceeds by devious routes—too narrow for the carriage—through the squalid, reeking bazaar, which can have changed but little in two thousand years, till one reaches the Church of the Nativity. This was built on the site of the inn by Constantine and his mother Helena. They had forty-four columns of Solomon's Temple brought from Jerusalem for its construction.

At the end furthest from the door are three altars; and standing before the central one, with fixed bayonet and bandolier of ball cartridge, was a sentinel. Perceiving my amazement, the guide observed, "Turkish soldier, just to keep peace between the Christians."

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He went on to explain that the central and right altars belonged to the Greek Church, that on the left to the Armenian, and around an angle, not visible from there, was the Latin Chapel. The Shrine of the Nativity itself, common to all, lay underneath those three altars where we were standing. A carpet spread over the floor in front of the Armenian altar had about one-third folded back over itself; this was to give the Latins a clear path of access to the steps leading down to the Shrine of the Nativity below. So frequent and so murderous is the jealous strife between these zealous servants of one Master, that a soldier of Islam has always to watch over their devotions and prevent the Armenian priests and friars from encroaching on the Latin right of way.

We then descended a few steps to a chamber hewn out of the original rock where the manger used to be. A great silver star now marks its supposed position, and another shrine, some six feet away, the place where the Child was laid at the time of the Wise Men's visit. The whole is now like an ordinary Roman Catholic chapel. Jewelled offerings of priceless value thickly strew and cover the shrines. Another sentry stands there on guard, more necessary than ever

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"Just to keep peace between the Christians" on this common ground, his grim figure in the gloom contrasting strangely with the barbaric gauds and tinsel that envelop the birthplace of the purest, bravest Man this world has ever known.

We soon made our way out to the courtyard and through the press of priests to the little town itself. The population is nearly entirely Christian, with just a sprinkling of Mahomedans; not a single Jew lives there. The inhabitants are largely engaged in the manufacture of mother-of-pearl ornaments and knick-knacks, principally souvenirs in the form of crosses and rosaries, which they plague the passer-by with their solicitations to purchase, or at least inspect. The necessary shells are gathered and brought from the Red Sea, and here they prepare and fashion them by hand, using only files and bows. There was nothing else of uncommon interest, so my guide asked if I would like a glass of real Persian sherbet. Always glad of some new thing, I readily assented and was led to a sordid little inn, whose landlord brewed this vaunted nectar from white powder out of a huge squat glass jar, bearing the label and trade-mark of a well-known firm in York. At any rate, this nauseous beverage loosened the taciturn tongue

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of my guide, for he became quite loquacious on the homeward way. He launched out into a heated denunciation of the existing regime, declaring property and even life were so insecure that not a young man was to be found on the country-side who had the strength and means to seek his fortune elsewhere. He informed me too—a fact of which I believe our Government is totally unaware—that we are going to take over Palestine and the French Syria, adding a fervent hope that the day was near at hand. He then drew so alluring a picture of the country's resources, gold, silver, lead, oil, salt and grain, all unexploited on account of the prevailing chaos, that one was for a moment half-tempted to raise a standard and win for oneself this Eldorado.

I learned subsequently that though there was an element of truth in the statements of my companion, yet these good Syrians expect all the privileges of citizenship, but protest bitterly against the obligations of the same. It has always been so easy to raise a world-wide howl of execration against Turkey. It seemed that conscription of Christians was just then the fountain of their grief; eighty thousand men were being levied on account of the war, and those nominated could only evade service by

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payment of £30 (Turkish). The Christians raised a cry of horror at being compelled to fight in the ranks of Islam against fellow Christians. At other times their religious conscience is not so acute. It is possible that, like those of India, they are the poorest specimens of their race.

As there was no particular hurry, we prevailed, with the utmost difficulty, upon our infant driver to moderate the pace somewhat, so that we could see what was going on around. The wayfarers were fairer than one had expected; some walked, but the majority rode donkeys and a few jogged along on camels. These animals were mostly used as beasts of burden; at that hot season their coats had all been shorn, and their loads were surprisingly merciful. The attachment of the Arab to his horse is proverbial; it is, in fact, vital to his existence; but with that exception the true Oriental, though not actively cruel, has no pity for his dumb slaves. He would never think of inflicting pain on them wantonly, but, sick or sorry, lame or galled, the very utmost ounce of work must be got out of them, and he is quite indifferent to any suffering they may have to endure in the fulfilment of that end. Half-way home we met a small detachment of Turkish infantry marching on relief. They were by no means "chocolate soldiers"; they

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wore, in spite of the heat, a thick khaki serge, often patched and darned, and there was no suspicion of tidiness or discipline in their straggling rabble; but they had about them an indefinable something of workmanship that boded a tough encounter for any one who might run up against them. Each man had bound up the working parts and sights of his rifle in rough cloth—a manifestation of that natural warrior instinct shared with their country cousins, the Afridis of the Indian Borderland, whose lives may depend from day to day on the accuracy of their weapons. Most of their kit was slung anyhow on their backs, while a single camel composed the entire transport of the detachment.

After lunch the Expedition made a fresh start. Sir Aboosh had had the courtesy to send a really good Arab pony this time, and we cantered off gaily towards the Mount of Olives. My surly and seditious friend took me by a circuitous route in order to show certain sites and monuments of Biblical significance, which, alas, I have long since forgotten. Outside the town many modern villas dot the roadside inhabited by those who, like the hermits of old, are engaged in the Great Speculation—that is to say, they abstain from using the capital of this



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joyous life on the chance of obtaining some substantial return in another.

We gradually worked around to the north-west; it was from that less precipitous quarter that the citadel was on every occasion carried by assault. From the Mount of Olives itself one gets an extensive view of the surrounding country. A little to the left lies Bethlehem; far on, down in that, the lowest valley of the world, is Jericho. A single, dark, rigid line of trees, sharply defined against the dreary background, delineates the course of Jordan, till it ends abruptly where, in the centre of the scene, balefully gleam the sluggish, sullen waters of the Dead Sea—around which nothing ever grows, over which no bird ever flies, and wherein there is no living thing—a waste of desolation, the tomb of Sodom and Gomorrah. I had already arranged with the owner of the hotel for a two days' excursion to Jericho, but this distant survey of its situation and terrible setting was enough to make me quickly change my mind. There are too many wildernesses of that kind in the ordinary course of life, without going out of one's way to look for them.

We turned our backs and went on, but like Lot's wife were impelled by some morbid fascination to keep looking over our shoulders at this

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same scene which had wrought such uncomfortable havoc on that poor inquisitive lady. Soon the guide called a halt, and indicated with an air of proprietorship the rock from which Jesus had mounted his ass on Palm Sunday, imprinted, of course, with his footmark. Next we turned into a Russian church, attached to a convent hard by, where a service was about to begin. The congregation consisted of a few lay pilgrims and about fifty nuns. The latter wore a tall, black cylindrical head-dress, and black robes. Their faces were nearly all of one type—heavy, square, almost wooden, though those of the elder sisters had acquired that peculiar unhealthy serenity so common in those who have been long wedded to the Church. The priest entered, swinging incense, and all the nuns performed the most exaggerated genuflections and gestures of self-abasement. It was very impressive, but very barbaric. Beneath the gorgeous robes of the priest were the rude features and figure of a peasant. Presently there was a great clearing of throats, then a chant, in harmonies, flowed out and swelled through the space. This too was very moving, very sweet, but *so* melancholy. It is such a contradiction; this whole sad land, still the lodestar of a myriad hopes, is steeped in deepest melancholy, and that sad sweet chant in

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the evening air poignantly reflected it; it breathed no hope—only resignation, despair. There was something unutterably tragic, too, in the sight of all those buried women, some in the first fresh flush of girlhood, who might have sinned and sorrowed, lived and loved and laughed, who might have filled many homes with sunshine. But after all, each must seek happiness according to the measure of his own soul and purse.

After leaving this church I was shown the spot where Jesus is generally believed to have taught His disciples the "Lord's Prayer"—though the actual place is in Galilee. Queen Helena had a temple erected there, and on the ruins of that temple a great Roman lady quite recently built a chapel, in whose long cool cloisters are numbers of tablets engraved with the Lord's Prayer in every known language. Opposite the entrance, in a recess, is her tomb, crowned with a recumbent marble effigy of herself; the gentle dignity of the figure and haunting sweetness of the face, force one against one's better judgment to tolerate, and even sympathise with the woman-impulse that resulted in this eccentricity. A niche within the same enclosure contains an urn holding the heart of this lady's husband, inscribed with the story of his good

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deeds, and concluding with the naïve hope that, on account of his wife's conspicuous munificence, he may not be altogether overlooked in the place where he has gone.

From there we descended by a tortuous, narrow track to the Garden of Gethsemane. One had a not unnatural shrinking from invading it—a feeling akin to eavesdropping, intrusion—till we reached the gate, a brightly gilded affair. From the interior came loud sounds of laughter and merriment; some parties of tourists were perambulating it. Right in its midst one aged tree still timidly spreads out its weary limbs, as yet unmolested by the gardeners. All else is stiff and artificial—trim iron railings, carefully groomed pathways, bounded by rigidly regular boxwood borders. Close by the tree is a staring fountain, carved deep in blatant capitals with some woman's hideous name. On every side are perfectly symmetrical flower beds, laid out in geometrical exactitude. It was as though some sufferer's anguished heart were torn out and exposed in a glass case, neatly labelled, to public curiosity.

After a while we found ourselves at the lodge of the wily old Franciscan in charge, who dispenses wine to visitors and deprecatingly accepts a little something for the maintenance of those

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aggressive flower-beds. His presence shudderingly recalled to my mind another of his kind, who, when I was a very small boy, was unsteadily lighting the way through the Catacombs, and suddenly collapsed on the candle in the remotest part, overcome by what he afterwards swore was the stupor of fatigue, and left us children in the darkness to face the terror of the grinning skulls.

There was a little American fellow in the room, about seven or eight years old, whom one could not help liking for his sublime self-assurance and audacity. Hearing that the old friar had been in America, he shouted at him, "Say, I guess you made more money there than you do here!" But I had my doubts.

Having quaffed deep, we mounted our steeds again and cantered on to "Gordon's" Calvary—for there are two rival claimants to the title of that "green hill far away, without a city wall," about which so many childish voices sing.

A delightfully frank young German took me in hand; his air was almost apologetic as he explained that "we" (in Egypt, Rome, Greece, everywhere, the custodians of public monuments invariably employ the regal first person plural, as though at the same time identifying themselves

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with the monument whose special care is theirs, and with the band of savants whose researches have brought to light that knowledge which they are about to impart) "we" do not claim that this is the genuine scene of the Crucifixion and sepulture; but we do claim that it most closely corresponds to the existing descriptions. He gave many plausible reasons to support that theory. Certainly the outline of the cliff bore some resemblance to a skull; it was, indeed, the sort of place that might have been used for executions; but to my sceptical mind the Sepulchre seemed too close and handy. He told me too that it was not Gordon who drew attention to the site and discovered its tombs, but certain archaeologists of repute, whose works were too technical and recondite for the public taste to be widely read. Gordon took a keen interest in it, a fact which became generally known at the time of his heroic end. If he were living now, it is doubtful whether his name would be indissolubly associated with that disputed mound of earth.

Night was falling when we regained the hotel. The day had been long and full, and I was determined at all costs, by any trick, wile or villainy, to evade the kindness of my so well-intentioned photographic friend. Fortunately, another old

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gentleman—anything young is rare and incongruous in Jerusalem—took compassion on me, and beguiled the hours till long after midnight with his very entertaining reminiscences of men and places.

Before going to bed I called for some stamps. "Which will you have," said the waiter, "Austrian or German?"

I stared haughtily at him, for I strongly disapprove of levity on the part of waiters. Even if I did look like, and indeed was, a tramp, I was nevertheless stopping in that hotel, and entitled to respect from its menials. The old gentleman then laughingly explained that nations concerned there made their own postal arrangements, for the Turkish official, if interested in the exterior of an envelope, does not hesitate to investigate, and, pious man, invariably destroys all picture postcards of Christian significance. The astute correspondent does not therefore patronise the indigenous institution.

## CHAPTER XI

### JERUSALEM

**T**HE following morning I marched under the flag of a hotel guide called Philip, famed for his profound knowledge of the Temple Area. He was a cheery fellow in his way, but a little overawed by the extent of his own wisdom, spoke English perfectly, having served a year in an Oriental Exhibition at Earl's Court, and might have passed anywhere for an Italian but for his fez. Unhappily he was an enthusiast, an inexorable taskmaster, and dragged me to many places which I had not the least desire to see. A gorgeous consular guard, armed to the teeth, for whom we had specially to apply at great expense, came with us to protect our lives in the Mahomedan sacred areas. The authorities do not hold themselves responsible for outbursts of fanaticism, and demand that tourists shall be so escorted on the holy ground. As a matter of fact, the precaution



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is absolutely unnecessary: this brilliant fellow's office was merely a sinecure, an ingenious extortionary device, for in these degenerate days the more civilised priests of Islam in tourist-ridden places gladly welcome any one to their mosques from whom they may expect some bakshesh. However, one did not grudge the expense, for he was a continual joy to look upon, for all the world like Murat, and it gave me a delicious feeling of importance to think this dazzling presence was really my retainer, even if only for an hour or two. He might even have obeyed me if I could have spoken his language.

On entering a masjid one must thrust one's feet into straw cases, or slippers provided for the purpose, lest one should defile the holy place. The Mahomedan himself removes his footwear, in precisely the same way as we take off our hats when we go into church.

We went first to the Mosque of Omar, named after the generous and merciful conqueror of Jerusalem, who himself selected the site. The quiet, tranquil dignity of its interior, formed a restful contrast to the sights and mummeries of the previous day. In the middle, encircled by an iron railing, is the "Holy Rock of Jerusalem," from which one night Mahomet

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made a journey to Heaven. This rock, adhering to his feet, accompanied his flight, till Gabriel was sent to release it. You can see quite distinctly the footprints of the Prophet and the finger-marks of the Archangel. This is all the more wonderful because Mahomet never arrived at Jerusalem. At one time this rock was exploited, for political purposes, as a rival to Mecca, to which circumstance the great dome above it owes its existence. In a recess of the rock are three hairs of Mahomet's beard, which the High Imam ceremoniously sprinkles daily with rosewater. On the Day of Judgment these will coalesce, grow to a great length and be stretched across from Mount Moriah, over the Valley of Jehoshaphat to the Mount of Olives, Allah holding one end and the Prophet the other. All will then be served out with a pair of scales and required to walk this aerial line. The True Believer, balanced by a virtuous life or punctilious observances of the Law, will pass safely to the farther side into everlasting voluptuousness; whereas the Infidel and backslider will fall over into the abyss and be dashed to eternal destruction on the jagged rocks below.

Near the entrance, in the flooring, is a rough surface of stone about a foot square; into this the Prophet drove a number of nails

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representing the centuries, which vanish with them. There are still three and a half to go—a comforting reflection for those who are insured. A special mullah presides over it, who sells tickets for Heaven from half a franc, to Man and Woman, Faithful and Infidel, with commendable impartiality. He is, as it were, the box-office of Paradise.

Around the colonnade of another mosque, the Cubbet es Sakhras, is a magnificent Cufic inscription in mosaic, known as the "Denunciation of Christ." I make no apology for quoting it in full, in spite of its Koranic texts, for it is intensely interesting as an index to the spirit in which those early Mahomedans regarded Christianity. The translation is as follows:—

"In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! There is no god but God alone; He hath no partner; His is the kingdom, His the praise. He giveth life and death, for He is the Almighty. In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! There is no god but God alone; He hath no partner; Mohammed is the Apostle of God; pray God for him. The servant of God Abdallah, the Imam al Mamun, Commander of the Faithful, built this dome in the year 72 (A.D. 691). May God accept it at his hand, and be content with

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him, Amen! The restoration is complete, and to God be the praise. In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! There is no god but God alone; He hath no partner. Say He is the one God, the Eternal; He neither begetteth nor is begotten, and there is no one like Him. Mohammed is the Apostle of God; pray God for him. In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! There is no god but God, and Mohammed is the Apostle of God; pray God for him. Verily, God and His angels, pray for the Prophet. Oh ye who believe, pray for him, and salute ye him with salutations of peace. In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! There is no god but God alone; to Him be praise, who taketh not unto Himself a son, and to whom none can be a partner in His kingdom, and whose patron no lower creature can be; magnify ye Him. Mohammed is the Apostle of God; God, and His angels, and apostles pray for him; and peace be upon him, and the mercy of God. In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! There is no god but God alone; He hath no partner; His is the kingdom, and His the praise; He giveth life and death, for He is Almighty. Verily, God and His angels, pray for the Prophet. Oh ye who believe, pray for

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him and salute him with salutations of peace. Oh ye who have received the Scriptures, exceed not the bounds in your religion, and speak not aught but truth concerning God. Verily, Jesus Christ, the son of Mary, is the Apostle of God, and His word which He cast over Mary, and a spirit from Him. Then believe in God and His apostles, and do not say there are three gods; forbear, and it will be better for you. God is but One. Far be it from Him that He should have a son. To Him belongeth whatsoever is in the heaven and in the earth, and God is a sufficient protector. Christ does not disdain to be a servant of God, nor do the angels who are near the throne. Whosoever, then, disdains His service, and is puffed up with pride, God shall gather them all at the last day. O God, pray for Thy apostle Jesus, the son of Mary; peace be upon me the day I am born, and the day I die, and the day I am raised to life again. That is Jesus, the son of Mary, concerning whom ye doubt. It is not for God to take unto Himself a son; far be it from Him. If He decree a thing, He doth but say unto it, Be, and it is. God is my Lord and yours. Serve Him, this is the right way. God hath testified that there is no god but He, and the angels, and beings endowed with knowledge (testify it), He

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executeth righteousness. There is no God but He, the Mighty, the Wise. Verily, the true religion in the sight of God is Islam. Say praise be to God, who taketh not unto Himself a son, whose partner in the kingdom none can be; whose patron no lower creature can be. Magnify ye Him!"

We passed on from there to another edifice originally built by Justinian and used as a Crusader church till the second Mahomedan Conquest, when it was duly converted into a mosque. Within it are two thick marble pillars, set about eight inches apart, whose opposite interior circumferences are worn quite concave, for there was a superstition that only the righteous could pass between, and great numbers of pilgrims, conscious of their rectitude, used to essay the ordeal, till finally one aspirant, whose corporal bulk was wider than his virtue, stuck fast and perished miserably after many days of torture. The authorities then had a stout pointed iron stake planted in the intervening space so as to prevent any repetition of this tragedy.

Thence we descended to the vast subterranean stables of King Solomon's horses, one of the few remaining relics of those ancient days unobliterated by the incessant storms of

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conquest and destruction. The care and forethought lavished on the appointments of those horses would not have disgraced a modern racing stable. All around, there as everywhere else, even in the most so-called sacred places, the names of fools were written thickly on the walls and available spaces. It is a curious thing, this instinctive craving for notoriety in even the humblest human heart that thus horribly manifests itself.

Next I was conducted to Pilate's house and the Judgment Hall; the latter, occupied by a school for waifs under the superintendence of the Sisters of Zion, is perhaps the brightest feature of Jerusalem. Down below it can be seen a few stones of the original road that led from there to Calvary, now called the Via Dolorosa, because upon it the most illustrious of mankind twice sank down beneath that burden of suffering and shame which has since become, throughout the world, the emblem of Christianity.

Philip inflexibly drove me on. We saw next the Wailing Place—a positively revolting spectacle of degradation—where every sort, sex, size, age and condition of Jew were wailing the Lamentations of Jeremiah, kissing and beating their heads against the stones of the

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Temple and beseeching that their country might be restored to them. It was not thus their forebears strove to regain and hold their own. The interstices between the stones were crammed with nails and slips of paper, representing, so Philip said, prayers, on something the same principle as the Buddhists' Wheel.

Afterwards we came to the Pool of Bethesda, the waters which the healing angel stirred, where Jesus bade the friendless lame man take up his bed and walk. Crowds of crippled pilgrims still come here, blindly hoping for a miracle, and beyond all doubt faith cures are sometimes effected. Relations, too, come and take away the water for their afflicted ones who are too frail to make the journey themselves. Its guardian monk had to take us down a deep flight of steps to show us the little that remains.

On leaving it, an adjournment for lunch was proposed and carried unanimously. The scorching Syrian sun relentlessly beat down upon us as we slowly slouched along with unbuttoned coats. Anon we came abreast of the principal tavern, where Philip suggested it might be wise to irrigate the system; there being no opposition, his suggestion was immediately put into practice. Soon a number of



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his friends gathered around and graciously consented to take part in the symposium. With that combustible emotionalism of Southern peoples, they were in a moment all screaming imprecations at the top of their voices against the state of affairs, and cursing the tyrannous oppression that prevented their attaining the most dizzy heights of affluence. Theirs was the same old story of the previous guide, though stimulated by something stronger than sherbet this time. It would be broadening and salutary—as well as affording a delicious entertainment—for Bengal to be placed under that regime for a spell. But, although with the utmost delicacy I refrained from mentioning it, an ugly suspicion would cross my mind that Philip and his friends were not the stuff from which the world's-workers are made.

In the afternoon we went to the Holy Sepulchre, that is to say, the generally accepted one, in contra-distinction to Gordon's Calvary; the one that was for two hundred years the magnet of Christian Europe; for whose recovery from the Saracen multitudes of pious warriors, penitent sinners, ruffian adventurers, and fugitive criminals flocked to the Holy Land, plundering, murdering, burning as they marched.

The whole hypothetical site is covered by

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a vast cupolaed pile, whose key is in the hands of Moslem janitors, for here, as in Bethlehem, the bitter animosity and antagonism between the various sects made it impossible that the key could be with one or the other of them. What an added sorrow it would have been to that overburdened, sublime Man could He have foreseen the petty, contemptible bickerings of His own followers around His body's resting-place! What a profitable source of speculation, too, to "the Heathen in his blindness" who keeps the key or stands on guard with fixed bayonet!

All inside must be regarded as purely problematical or rather emblematical, for there is, of course, no certainty since Hadrian rased Jerusalem to the ground. The interior is divided into many chapels, each the property of a different Church, and each containing some special site hallowed by an incident of the Crucifixion or the Sepulture. One contains the Stone of Unction, upon which the body was anointed for burial; another encloses the spot where Mary Magdalene spoke to the gardener; another contains a marble slab with three neatly drilled holes in it, representing Calvary itself and the crosses; a crack in the slab denotes the earthquake and the rending of the tombs. Hard

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by is another, dedicated to the penitent thief. Another, the place where Mary wept. Another contains the pillar to which Jesus was chained. The pillar is encased in a brass covering, and a fraction only of it can be seen through a small circular aperture; on the altar in front of it is a stick, which visitors thrust through and then kiss on the end that had touched the pillar. One chapel, *faute de mieux*, is built over Adam's skull; the daring of this conception must appeal to every imagination.

The Holy Sepulchre itself is common to all, and, like the place of the Nativity, covered and smothered in garish gauds and tinsel. Thousands of Russian peasants come there every year, having long and patiently hoarded their savings to make the pilgrimage. There the Patriarch juggles with fire on a certain day during Easter to impose upon the superstitious credulity of these poor creatures, who catch the Holy Fire on their candles and pass it on to each other in paroxysms of religious frenzy. The first one to receive it is accounted incalculably blessed. This ruse was devised by Baldwin I., the second Christian king of Jerusalem, in concert with his Patriarch Dagobert, "to arouse the flagging zeal of the pilgrims, and especially of certain Genoese and Pisans, who had a large fleet with

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them, the assistance of which he greatly desired." •

Sleek, pale-faced priests and friars swarmed in every chapel, performing their abject devotions. As one looked, the memory would rise to one's mind of certain clean-bodied padres who try to snatch red-hot brands from the burning with their own strong right arms down Mile End way. Yet after all, what are these modern disciples of Scotus and Aquinas for all their years of narrow theological study? Learning is not knowledge, and to live with Emerson's "privilege of the immeasurable mind," it is first necessary to have the privilege of at least a moderate purse. It is as hard for a poor man to see light as for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. Grovelling there, they seemed a little higher than the beasts of the field, much less gallant than savages; what more could be expected of such? But perhaps one wrongs them. The whole scene recalled so forcibly Emerson's words, "The idioms of his language and the figures of his rhetoric have usurped the place of truth; and churches are not built on his principles but on his tropes. . . . Historical Christianity has fallen into the error that corrupts all attempts to communicate religion.

\* "Jerusalem." Walter Besant and E. H. Palmer.

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As it appears to us, and as it has appeared for ages, it is not the doctrine of the soul, but an exaggeration of the personal, the positive, the ritual. It has dwelt, it dwells, with noxious exaggeration about the *person* of Jesus."

We went on to the Prison House, the Upper Chamber of the Last Supper and other places beginning with capital letters, because of the associations which have rendered them objects of interest and veneration. At the door of each stood a Judas demanding money as the price of entry, or, failing that, the purchase of post-cards or souvenirs. Towards evening we saw an Abyssinian service going on in a church-yard close by the Armenian convent. It was a pathetically ludicrous sight. At one time or other everybody has seen Sambo in some fantastic travesty and combination of European dress. Well, here he was in an appalling parody of sacred vestments. The priests were shaded by huge, barbarous umbrellas; they wore hideously soiled and threadbare robes of plush, profusely bedizened with trumpery finery, while on their heads were casques made of simple tin and gaily coloured paper, which might have been found in Christmas crackers. The intonation of their voices and the whole effect gave the impression of some burlesque of pagan rites.

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A large crowd of laughing and jeering Christians and Jews surrounded them ; in fact, their services, I learned, were a regular holiday spectacle.

There ended the exploration of Jerusalem. The Expedition remained one day more to recuperate its strength, then, leaving it without a single regret, took ship from Joppa to Piræus.

## CHAPTER XII

### TO PIRÆUS

**T**HIS time there was no occasion to impose upon the dubious hospitality of friend Hardeggs, since the hour of departure allowed only a hasty visit to the shipping office for the negotiation of a second-class ticket. My previous experiences had finally precluded me from ever travelling steerage again, even though all the wealth of Ophir lay to my hand at the journey's end. The alert gentleman who had dictated my movements on first arrival there, and had once more resumed charge of affairs, gravely approved of this step, for he naturally received a much larger commission from the office. As soon as that business had been settled, he had me driven down to the harbour with indecent haste, haste that savoured of the desire to get rid of a sucked orange, and shot me into a waiting boat. When I had recovered my breath enough to look around, I saw that the only other passengers

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were the two old missionary ladies of omelette memory. At Jerusalem they had never been on view, either taking their meals in their own room, or eating none at all. Always plaintive, they were even more so than usual now, for some heartless scoundrel had stolen their umbrella. A heavy swell was running, which imparted to the boat a motion that greatly increased their mental agitation, for by some occult psychic process, they were firmly convinced it was the boatmen's fault; that they were doing it on purpose out of a malicious wish to persecute them. Rightly suspicious of such wretches, they asked me to go with them as far as their boat—the one to Haifa—which lay further out than mine. Oh woman, woman, thy fair face is the cause of all misfortunes! I went. The seas were leaping higher and higher as we approached the vessel. Embarkation would be far from easy. A swarm of small craft were dancing and bobbing up and down like corks around the ship. We pushed our way through these, close up to the companion ladder, and contiguous to an enormous native hulk which was unloading oranges into the hold. At the instant when I stood up on the seat to lend a hoisting hand with the old ladies, a wave, larger than the rest, swept us right under the side of the hulk.



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Rising on the crest, it towered above for a moment, then fell crashing on our oars. One oar started like a spring released, shot its rower head over heels into the bottom of the boat, caught me amidships and slung me far out to sea, amid shrieks of delight from the onlookers. The discomfiture of a human being is always a source of great amusement to his fellows. Within a month this was the second providential occurrence of that kind, in countries where washing is prohibitive and baths a luxury of the rich.

The genial sun pretty well dried my rags while we plunged and staggered over the foaming billows towards our ship. During that time my mind was divided between morbid speculation on the chances of retaining my breakfast—a serious consideration for one so destitute—and wondering, as one does, what sort of cabin and cabin mates I was going to get. In those parts boatmen, carriage-drivers, dragomen, railway-porters and all the lesser lights of industry have their own visiting cards. As we neared our destination the owner of the boat presented me with his, and begged me to be sure and let him know if ever I felt I wanted him in England, and he would come at once, without a moment's delay. The tempting offer was undoubtedly

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made in all sincerity; their keenness to visit other countries at no expense to themselves is very great, and they frequently implore tourists to take them along home with them, although in what capacity they have no very definite idea.

Embarkation was effected in a scrambling ignominious sort of way. It turned out that my anxiety about a cabin and cabin mates had been quite unnecessary, for I was speedily informed by a grizzled old steward with St. Vitus' dance that there was no cabin for me at all—they were all full: he would see about making up a bed in the first-class dining-saloon after every one had retired for the night.

Having therefore no opportunity of changing my clothes, I went up again to let the sun finish its work of drying those which I had on. I found, however, all the well-known litter of the steerage crowding our deck so profusely that it was impossible to walk a yard. They had overflowed their own place and were flooding out ours. But I soon noticed that the other second-class passengers were making themselves quite at home on the first-class deck. It appeared that the ship was run on altogether socialistic lines; all passengers, whatever class their ticket, enjoyed equal rights of deck accommodation; the only qualification for admittance to that upper deck

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being a fairly civilised exterior. For that reason I was nearly excluded. In the light of this discovery I began to regret my prodigality in going second-class, since on the steerage of this ship one would have been able to sleep in God's good air beneath the sky and stars, which seemed no more undesirable than the doubtful comfort of a dirty sofa in the stuffy, food-smelling saloon.

At lunch I had the misfortune to sit opposite a youthful French student of most unpleasing mien. His whole face was one wicked, supercilious sneer; it spoiled my appetite, and caused me the acutest misery, since I had an uneasy feeling that my still somewhat sodden and dishevelled appearance must have been the reason. Happily, towards evening I saw him sleeping in a deck chair, with the sneer, if anything, accentuated. It was an immense relief, for I would not believe that he had carried my image into his dreams. At the same meal we were astonished by another uncommon feature of this truly remarkable boat. They provided wine, free of charge. In truth it tasted more like ink; but free ink is better than no ink, and one couldn't very well complain about it. Certain members of the ship's staff presided over the various tables. As far as one could judge the

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staff's composition was international; no two officers were of the same nationality. This must greatly have facilitated discipline, and gave one an additional sense of security. Needless to say, the chief engineer was Scotch; both in fiction and reality he always is—one of the rare cases where these extremes meet.

When the repast was finished, I ascended to the deck saloon and started a dreamy, contemplative pipe. Three of the ship's officers were there; one of them an engineer, one who united the duties of doctor and purser, and one watch-keeper. There were a few other people besides, writing and smoking, and some children playing with a clockwork motor. Suddenly, from outside, a piercing scream of terror chilled our hearts. It was swallowed instantly in a tumult of despairing shrieks, followed by a rush of stampeding feet. The ship listed to that side. In a moment hoarse oaths and scuffling, and all the awful sounds of craven mortal fear were mingling with the shriller cries in frenzied discord. All were out of the saloon in a flash, headed by the staff. It was obvious that there was going to be no funny chivalrous business about saving passengers first, and that sort of thing, so I slipped out of the door on the other side, the zone of least excitement, to form some

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kind of "appreciation of the situation" with a view to saving my own unworthy skin. But the uproar died as suddenly as it had begun. Its origin was as follows. A boatload of Jews were trying to come on board, but the seas were now so high that children had literally to be thrown from the boat to the gangway, where a sailor stood ready to catch them. One wretched baby, unskilfully thrown, had been missed, and fell into the boiling sea between the boat and the ship. Thereupon its distracted mother and her companions set up a heartrending wail, which spread a wildfire panic through all the Orientals on board. For so small a reason it was an ugly exhibition. The innocent and involuntary cause of all the trouble was fished out on the end of a boathook, none the worse for its immersion.

Shortly after that incident, several hours later than the advertised time of sailing, we put out to sea. In the course of the evening I became acquainted with two splendid specimens of Australian manhood, brothers, who were making a tour of half the world. They were sons of a large ranche owner, and had many interesting and wonderful things to tell about the life out there. Yet, in spite of that hard training, of all the naked life they must have seen, and all the uncommon things they must

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have done, their ideas and conversation were extraordinarily narrow. They gave the impression of having something on their minds which they wanted to tell, but could not quite bring themselves to do it. I fancied, too, that I detected a tinge of resentment in anything they said about their father and their home, which sordidly led one to suppose that they had been launched on this enterprise without the means of doing it well. When Jerusalem was mentioned, however, they displayed about the state of affairs there a heat and bitterness of feeling equal almost to mediæval bigotry; more especially the younger, in whose eyes awoke the stern light of puritanical fanaticism. I was not surprised, therefore, when cooled a little and half ashamed of their ardour, they told me diffidently, and not without embarrassment—though Heaven only knows why!—that they were parsons—Wesleyan ministers. Then it was easy to understand the tone in which they spoke of their home, to read the domestic tragedy underlying their words. One seemed to see it all—the arguments, the vain appeals, their stubbornness, and, lastly, their father's rage and disappointment. For in a land and calling where physique counts for much, he must have believed himself richly blessed in two such

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stalwart boys. During his old age he would have the satisfaction of their able assistance and support. That time had come, and instead, he saw them devoting to an abstract service of other men that strength which he had fostered, and from which he had not unreasonably expected so much. Rightly or wrongly, one felt for the father.

Nevertheless, their clear, healthy faces and vigorous frames, their quaint tricks of speech, and a simple directness of manner, atoned largely for the restricted range of their thoughts and made them refreshing company. We had a cheery dinner together, criticising, and, I fear—as is our wont—congratulating ourselves on our superiority to the dagos around about us. For down in the bottom of his soul, every true Briton has a hearty, wholesome contempt for the inhabitants of those countries which he condescends to visit. Long may it be so.

Eventually we were swept away with the crumbs. They sought their cabin in accordance with those excellent principles of early to bed, early to rise and moderation in all things, which characterised their daily lives, while I climbed up on the topmost deck for the fuller enjoyment of the day's final and crowning bliss—the calumet, the peace-pipe. I sprawled carelessly

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over a wooden seat, for the light of day had faded; there was no moon, only the dim, uncertain radiance of the stars. Very few people remained on deck. Two American girls, members of a touring party, were promenading, and kept passing and repassing my seat. I watched them absently as they waned, and loomed, and waned again, noticing, idly at first, whenever a bright beam of light from door or window partly illuminated their figures, that these had yet the grace and elasticity of early youth, and were clothed in frocks from Paris. Soon I became a little interested, for, as a class, I love girls, although rather nervous of them individually. Then slowly and gradually a great loneliness welled up within me. I felt very, very far away from those pretty creatures. Worlds rolled between us. It was thousands of years since I had spoken to anything like them. I began to be very sorry for myself indeed, out there all alone, living on husks, with no one to care a brass farthing if I jumped overboard. It was a dreadfully pathetic picture. Just as I was revelling in the lowest depths of self-pity, one of the girls said good-night to the other and vanished. The remaining one, wearied of walking, sat down on the seat beside me. This was disquieting. I



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covertly pulled myself together and craved permission to go on smoking. It was granted in the soft, soothing accent of the South, followed by the information that she liked the smell of tobacco. There was a heavy silence, while a man might puff four times, then she said—

“By your speech you are American?”

I disclaimed the honour so humbly that she overlooked the misfortune of my birth, and we were soon deep in a long and earnest conversation about nothing in particular, which lasted till her chaperone came and haled her off to bed.

After that I was more lonely, more sorry for myself than before, for my starved susceptibilities had been not a little touched by this unexpected friendliness. We should be on the same ship for the next five days or so, but should I ever meet her again? That was the question. All the innate snobbishness of our race—which I had long flattered myself I was above—surged up over me; I couldn't bear to think that she should know I was second-class, or ever had been. Two minutes later I was in the purser's office changing my ticket. He did it, but regretted he couldn't give me a cabin till the next day, so I still had to

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sleep in the saloon. That one idiotic impulse, that single capricious folly of a moment, so contrary to the spirit of the Expedition, curtailed it by several hundred miles. Had I been honest enough to tell this divinity my true condition there and then, I doubt not I should still often have had the pleasure of her society on that upper deck, I should certainly have been spared a great deal of shame and humiliation, and I should have left the boat richer in purse and self-esteem.

I turned in, beginning to curse myself for a doubly-condemned lunatic, but quickly remembered that of all follies none is so great as to repine over a deed that is done, a tale that is told. And so, consoling myself with the reflection that extravagance is the privilege of the poor, just as economy is the luxury of the rich, I fell into dreamless sleep.

Next I became aware of a hand shaking the shoulder of a body with which I seemed to have some remote connection. A small, distant voice from over illimitable areas was saying something about "Mister Johnson" and laying "ze table for breakfast." Vaguely relieved that it had not called me Mister Smith, I snuggled down to sleep again. But the hand on the shoulder grew rougher, the connection between

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mind and matter more palpable, and the voice louder, larger, and more insistent.

Passive resistance being no longer possible, I sat up and angrily demanded to know the reason of this infringement on the right of a free-born subject to sleep as long as he likes during holiday time. The head steward, for it was to him I owed these delicate attentions, replied brusquely that I must get up at once and clear out of the saloon, as it was time to lay the table for breakfast. This sounded reasonable enough, but nevertheless I took a great dislike to him, for he had a mean figure and a weasel face; moreover, it is hard to forgive the spoiler of one's beauty sleep. Further argument would not only have been futile, but undignified, so without more ado I gathered up the necessary articles of toilet and made for the bath. By the time I had extracted from it several cases of wine, cleaned it, used it, and shaved, the greater part of an hour must have elapsed. On re-entering the saloon in a flimsy, gaily-coloured kimono, I was disconcerted to find it half full of eating people. A stout, smartly dressed lady of uncertain age but unquestionable appetite, was seated on the spot where I had slept. Under the seat, peeping out from behind her skirts, was my suit-case, with

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its frayed and ragged lid, gaping widely open, and squashed down on my garments of the day before, which evidently had been hurriedly thrust in—no doubt on the appearance of the hungry lady. It looked so forlorn and wistful, staring at me from there. Napoleon has said “the secret of war lies in the communications.” Emphatically I was defeated; mine were cut. I sat down in a vacant corner to consider the situation in all its aspects. Catching sight of me, the head steward rushed up and abusively ordered me out to the second class, where I belonged. Then, for the first time, I remembered the episode of the night before. Instead of relief, I was filled with dismay, lest my little friend should be one of the witnesses of this scene, which was beginning to attract the attention of every one in the room. I glanced anxiously around; no, praises be, neither she nor any of her party was there; these were only the people about to get off at Port Said—a most fortunate affair. Meanwhile—with all the Southerner’s excitement about a trifle—the steward’s exhortations to get out became louder and increasingly violent. I told him that my ticket had been changed. He was taken aback for a moment, but to save his face resumed the attack on the lines of my scanty costume.

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Feeling in a fairly strong position, I then beckoned a passing officer and explained the facts of the case, whereupon my assailant was reprimanded for his excess of zeal and told to take my clothes to the bath-room, whither I preceded him. He arrived, carrying my old way-worn suit at arm's length, nose in air, wearing an expression of unutterable disdain. That evening, however, a terrible retribution was to overtake him.

Alone and confronted with the said way-worn suit, looking inexpressibly shabby, the recollection of my night's adventure rose up once more, bringing with it the pleasurable anticipations. There was no bell in the bath-room; at the risk of further unpleasantness, I shrank from entering the saloon again in my kimono, and so had no other course open than to don these offending garments with as light a heart as possible, till such time as it might please the powers to give me a cabin of my own.

I went up on deck and watched our entry into Port Said with all its attendant bustle and surrounding scenes of activity and interest. At its mouth a fleet of dredgers were busied in their ugly work of keeping clear the harbour's channel. On every side, great stately liners bound to and from India, Australia, and the

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farther East, lay coaling. Thick around them clustered the flat barges, teeming with a naked, scarcely-human swarm, which maintained a perpetual sing-song dirge while it toiled and shovelled, raising over itself a dense black cloud of dust. There, belching voluminous smoke from her squat twin funnels, and straining at her leash, fretted the eager, strenuous little Osiris, all ready to take the mails off her big sister and plunge across to Brindisi, that those in England might have news of their absent ones a few hours earlier. Further up the basin lay innumerable cargo boats, slovenly, ungraceful, yet the symbol of the wealth of nations. One had hoped, nay expected, that the Red Ensign would have floated over more of them. Busy, snorting tugs fussed in and out among the leviathans. Swift launches of the Customs, Police and other departments, laden with uniformed officials, darted from shore to ship and ship. A crowd of rowing boats jostled about each passenger vessel, noisily bargaining against each other with intending landgoers. While I looked, a huge black liner glided in out of the Canal and came to anchor close beside us. Five minutes later a joyous stream of sight-seers poured down the companion-ladder, all laughing and gay, for after who knows how long an exile

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they were once more within a few days of home again. Sad indeed are those that know no home.

I turned away and was confronted by the distinguishing feather in the hat of the lady for whose unconscious sake I had suffered such indignities. I raised mine; she bowed and said brightly it was a fine day. As that was undeniable, I let it pass without comment, and asked her if she was going ashore. She said she was not; then, after a pause, asked me if I was. I said I was not. Then we both laughed merrily and fell into conversation. To my great disappointment, she now showed a very decided tendency to repeat herself. For instance, she described at length those places they had been to of which she still had some recollection—for, she said, so many were the cities they had seen, so short the time passed in them and so rapid the rate of their progress, that it was not easy to retain a very clear impression of them all. This was, of course, intensely interesting, but I had already heard it all the night before, and I was beginning to think my money even worse spent than it had at first appeared. Just as I arrived at this melancholy conclusion, another girl, who had been walking up and down, suddenly stopped in front of us and said—

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"So you won't know me this morning, then?"

So *that* was it! How could one possibly have known that girls wear each other's hats?

At this juncture a steward announced that they had allotted me a cabin, and I betook myself to it without delay, in order to make a toilet more suitable to my new environment, lauding myself on the foresight which had led me to pack at least one suit of passing respectability. When, however, it was drawn out from beneath the compressed mass of my other somewhat miscellaneous belongings and the accumulated litter of six weeks' travel, it presented none too reassuring a spectacle—for its concomitant linen was irreparably crumpled, and the suit itself creased and fluted like a Corinthian column. Nevertheless, it was a distinct improvement, and I returned to the deck less self-conscious than before. Soon, with that engaging frankness and entire lack of conventional reserve which so markedly distinguishes our American cousins from our own sisters, the whole of my two little friends' party had introduced themselves, and were chatting gaily on a wide variety of subjects. Their party consisted of six girls, an elderly couple with their small son William, and one spinster of the hopelessly



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permanent type, all under the supreme command of a *Chaperone*. The *Chaperone's* power was absolute, her duties manifold. She dictated the line of march, she decided the duration of each stay, she selected the hotels, she made all payments, I believe even of pocket-money, except to the parents of William. In addition to these despotic functions, she united a fluency in all modern languages with a wide knowledge of the arts and history, of which latter she imparted to her following those portions applicable to the locality of the moment.

The advantages of such a system must be evident to all. Freed from the sordid details of monetary affairs, from the vulgar necessity of self-reliance and from the mortifying obligation of using any language other than their own, their fancies could dwell unencumbered on the beauties of the ever-changing scenes—scenes advisedly changed with lightning-like rapidity, lest their minds should stagnate, lest a single precious hour should be wasted. This system, too, had one other attraction, far greater than all those enumerated above, namely, its enchanting element of expectation, for it is no exaggeration to say that none of those girls could tell with any certainty, from day to day, where they were going next. No Grand Signor was ever

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more absolute than is the American travelling chaperone of to-day.

After a while I found, with mingled confusion and amusement, that I was something of a personage among them. They had not yet been to England; I was, in fact, the only Englishman they had ever met, and consequently they displayed a most flattering interest in me, and were extremely eager to be told stories about the wild land of my birth. While thus indulging their curiosity, to lend more effect, more impressment, to my words, I leaned in an elegant attitude up against the frame of the skylight. Not equal to this undue weight, the support which propped it open suddenly gave way, and the frame fell to with a crash that shattered to fragments some of its huge plate-glass panes. The debris rained down into the depths below with an ominous jingling sound, followed by a clamour of startled, angry voices. Picturing horrible scenes of mutilation, I rushed down to the reading-saloon, but found no one injured there, as the glass had passed through an open space corresponding to the skylight, and down to the dining saloon beneath. Thither I then dashed with beating heart, and needed all my self-control not to burst out laughing when I saw the sole victim was my

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enemy, the head steward. He was bleeding profusely from his hands and face, and, I rejoice to think, until his dying day, will unalterably believe that I did it on purpose.

The next morning I was leaning over the taffrail, watching a school of porpoises solemnly diving after each other's tails as if that was the most serious business in the world. My attention was abruptly attracted by a hard, sharp dig on the thigh, and a treble voice enquiring—

“Say, ain't them the porpoyse or sea-hog?”

I looked down and beheld the animated, upturned, freckled face of William—a little boy not yet nine years old, in dark blue knickers, black shoes and stockings, tennis shirt of brownish silk with black tie and a fez.

That was the beginning of a warm friendship between us, which ripened and grew firmer as the days passed by. After a time I never took any important step without first consulting him; and I was always glad to have his opinion on controversial matters of public interest, for it was clear and shrewd, showing a thorough grasp of the subject. There was no common topic of the day in which he was not more than ordinarily versed. Whether all American children are like William, I cannot say—it was a question which one could hardly ask without

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grave risk of being misunderstood—but I gathered that they are not, from the admixture of reverence and awe that tinged the affection of his party towards him. This description may give the idea of a precocious little horror; but he was not so at all, for, in spite of his abnormal mentality, he retained all the transient charm of childhood. A woman would call him very lovable. He was, in fact, a tremendous favourite on board, both with the other children and their mothers. He frequently caused me much embarrassment, when I happened to pass him earnestly talking to one of his grown-up lady friends, for on those occasions he would favour me with a monstrously knowing wink, obvious for miles around, as much as to say, “We men must try and humour ’em, old chap, what!”

Once, though, during its earliest stage, our friendship was in jeopardy; it sustained, on my side, a grievous blow from which I scarce dreamed it could ever recover. It happened thiswise. William, learning that I had been in India, promptly asked—

“Were you ever melted there?”

I said I had been—often.

“Were you ever friz there?”

Again I said I had been. Then one of the girls laughingly remarked that I must be a

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regular hero to William. I modestly murmured I hoped it was so. William looked critically at me for what seemed an age; then he pushed his fez on the back of his head, planted his feet wide apart, plunged his fists deep into his knicker pockets and delivered judgment—

“Wa-aal, I guess *any* man can be melted and I guess *any* man can be friz.”

The next day we arrived at Alexandria. I had still been so foolish as not to tell my friends that I was nothing more than a tramp, a vagabond, upon the face of the earth; a folly the greater because an unfavourable *dénouement* always comes best from oneself. No other hand can be trusted to soften its harsher lines with the same delicateness of touch. As the ship was slowly sidling up to the Wharf, the first thing I saw was Abraham. Now the question of class is not an all-absorbing one to ordinary mortals, but it must naturally assume enormous proportions in the eyes of a man whose entire occupation, whose livelihood and the bread of whose wife and children depend on his ingenuity in preying on travellers. Divining, therefore, that Abraham would probably put me to shame by some puerile exhibition of surprise at my altered state, I hastily left the

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party and walked up to the other end of the deck. Abraham, having detected me, also walked abreast along the Quai, with his head cocked on one side and two fingers in the air—an almost speaking interrogation as to whether I was second class. I furtively put up two fingers, nodded my head and quickly withdrew them again. Abraham still looked puzzled; it was of course inconceivable that I could be first, but yet I was on the first-class deck. That required explanation—he was evidently ignorant of this line's socialistic propensity—so this time he put up one finger. I vigorously shook my head, lest he should betray me in his astonishment, for it must have been unique in his experience for a client to go off steerage and return the following week in luxury. The ship had now come within hailing distance. He raised both hands trumpet fashion to his mouth and drew in a deep breath preparatory to bellowing forth the perplexing question. I had barely time to avert the calamity by darting into the deck saloon. Thanking my stars for so narrow an escape, I shortly afterwards trooped into the dining-room with my American friends, whither all passengers had been ordered for medical inspection, previous to landing.

We were chatting merrily together while

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awaiting the inspector's arrival, when the ship's doctor appeared at the door with a sheet of paper in his hand. His eye rapidly travelled over the sea of faces till it came to rest on mine. A cold shiver ran down my spine as he began to come towards me. Tapping the paper in his hand, he bowed politely and asked in a loud clear voice if Monsieur would have the goodness to repair to the second class for this function, as, in accordance with some formality of the regulations, his name was still on its list.

We had to change across into another ship, on which further trouble immediately rose about that infernal ticket. They refused to accept it or give me a cabin until it had been endorsed by the Company's office, so thither I had to go, in no very amiable frame of mind. This circumstance, so annoying to me, was however a windfall to Abraham, for he could now claim commission on the whole distance, and he eagerly hustled me off to a tram with that end in view. As soon as that vexing business had been transacted to the satisfaction of all parties, Abraham gave me the pleasure of his company at lunch in a little eating-house just down a side street. During the course of that epicurean repast, a funeral came swiftly up the street. A rough wooden bier was borne high on the

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shoulders of a crowd of stalwart mourners. Over it was thrown a covering of light cotton material, which softened without concealing the rigid outline of the corpse. At the bier's head rose a vertical post, about a foot and a half high, on which was perched the dead man's fez with an air of pathetic jauntiness. Behind followed more mourners, and the whole cortège proceeded at a jog-trot, chanting the monotonous refrain :

“La ilaha ill'allah.”

The simplicity of this last rite was more touching than all the outward pomp and circumstance which characterises our own obsequies. Even as those people are carried to the grave in simplicity, so do they die, calmly and without fear, not attaching to the event that awful importance which their more enlightened Aryan brothers of the West still cannot but do. I remembered once being called to the deathbed of a young Mahomedan trooper. He was a fine lusty fellow of about twenty, with all his life still before him, when he met with the fatal accident that had brought him there. The end was very near when I arrived ; he kept sinking into unconsciousness. All around pressed a crowd of his relations and friends. Every time he seemed to swoon, they gently shook him and shouted in his ear that he was going to die.



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And each time the boy opened his eyes and said quietly, "It is my fate." And they, nodding, answered in chorus, "Yes, it is your fate."

After a final farewell to Abraham, I went on board the ship again and made the confession of my status, which would have been so much easier three days before. That two and half days' journey across the Mediterranean was a pleasant but uneventful affair. The single regret that darkens its memory was the fact of there being only one glass in my cabin, to which the other occupant established an undisputed right on the first night by putting in it his false teeth. In the evenings we had a great deal of vocal music, though all from the same performer. She, the resolute performer, was a handsome, middle-aged woman of strong character, whose voice was neither good nor bad—just hopelessly mediocre and so soon became intolerably wearisome. Our weak-minded chivalry in heartily applauding her first dozen or so efforts had made it impossible for any one else ever to get near the piano; and when she began to suspect that her songs were no longer appreciated, that we might even welcome a change, she was seized by a vindictive obstinacy and adhered to it more persistently than before. This trying state of affairs, exasperating to all, was particularly so

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to a young Greek—a cotton grower from Egypt. He was extremely proud of his skill on the flute, of which he was childishly eager to give us an exhibition, and, its case under his arm, he used to wring his hands and dance about in ludicrous impatience, while the ceaseless voice flowed on. On the second night, having failed to get to the piano by eleven o'clock, he could contain his indignation no longer. He tore the beloved flute from its case and tried to drown the hated voice with its shrillest notes. There followed a short hideous contest for dissonant supremacy, but the lady, calling up her inexhaustible reserve, easily flooded him out. A destroyer might as well have attacked a dreadnought. To relieve the tense atmosphere created by this unseemly interlude, we begged the little Greek to come outside and play dance music on the deck, which he willingly did. Encouraging him with insidious flattery, I looked sadly on while the girls danced with each other; for it had taken me twenty-five years to learn the simple waltz, and I could never hope to master those intricate gymnastics of the modern ballroom.

Our course up the Aegean and among the Cyclades was a pretty one. We passed quite close to the eastern-most corner of Crete, and William was delighted to hear—for the first

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time—its old, old story of bold Theseus, the Minotaur and poor Ariadne. During the day, when not rapturously admiring the Islands about us, we used to play what we called bridge. At those times I found William an invaluable ally, for, after going around and having a good look at everybody else's hand, he would come back, and in a piercing whisper give me very sound advice, based on the result of his observations.

In this, to me, novel society the time flew all too quickly, and so when one evening we saw afar off the immortal piles of the Acropolis and a little later stole reverently past Salamis into Piræus, it was with real regret that I said good-bye to those little people of the happy faces from Dixieland, each born with a sunbeam in her soul.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ATHENS

THE light had almost faded by the time we reached the shore. On the Quai a usual swarm of hotel harpies were noisily fighting for their prey, and I conditionally surrendered myself to one who seemed to be a representative of the more modest kind of establishment. He led me through the gathering darkness to the Customs House, and thence, after a perfunctory examination, by tram to the modern "Long Walls"—that is, the electric railway which plies between Piræus and Athens. Another twenty minutes, and I was driving, behind a meagre horse, through brightly-lighted, busy streets, towards the hotel which claimed me as its captive, missing—not without a sense of injury—that feeling of awe and veneration which I had been sure the City of the Dawning must inevitably inspire. A cheerful little proprietor greeted me cordially on the doorstep, and, announcing that I had arrived just in time

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for dinner, conducted me forthwith to the roof, where that meal was happily served. He deplored, as we climbed the endless stairs, the rise to popularity of Egypt, which in recent years had diverted from Athens its formerly copious flow of tourists. Leading me to a table occupied by a youth of about my own age, he bowingly introduced us to each other as compatriots, thereby showing an ignorance of national characteristics which must in a large measure have accounted for the unflourishing state of his hotel. This young man had long slimy hair, parted in the middle with rigid precision, was clean-shaven and hyper-immaculately dressed in clothes of decidedly provincial cut. His mind was so engrossed with the splendour of his appearance and the obligation of living up to it, as well as keeping his wrist linen with its gorgeous links and peeping handkerchief of blasphemous hues in proper evidence, that it found no leisure to impart those profitable ideas with which it was doubtless teeming. As my rôle is that of listener until interested, this meal was not distinguished by scintillating conversation and repartee. Afterwards, he proposed we should go out into the town. We went, but very soon parted company, for he refused to stir from the most prominent café, while I was

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anxious to roam around and see for myself the various strata of Athenian life—comrade William having told me that the market quarter was especially interesting. He, on the other hand, being very sensitive to smells and squalor, was in no way concerned with “how the other half lives,” in fact, he considered its place was to gaze from afar on his effulgent presence with eyes of envy and admiration. I fear he thought that I was a very vulgar fellow, and I, for my part, had no doubt that he suffered seriously from the ultra-refinement of the under-bred. But every man his own taste.

Mindful of the words of Cicero—that “there is not one spot in all this city, no single place where the foot may tread, which does not possess its history”—I was, for me, up and doing betimes the following morning.

As one slowly mounts the precipitous Cecropian rock, it is easy to understand why Athens was the cradle of reason, culture, and the arts. Dwelling in a clime where all the powers of Nature were kindly and beneficent, her thinkers had aspired to know and dared to doubt, while peoples of other climes and features more austere, had only ventured to worship and propitiate. Bulwer says of it:

“The air is serene—the climate healthful—

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the seasons temperate. Along the hills yet breathe the wild thyme and the odorous plants which, everywhere prodigal in Greece, are more especially fragrant in that lucid sky; and still the atmosphere colours with peculiar and various tints the marbles of the existent temples and the face of the mountain landscapes. . . . Greece's greatest length is two hundred and twenty geographical miles; its greatest width one hundred and forty. No contrast can be more startling than the speck of earth which Greece occupies in the map of the world, compared to the space claimed by the Grecian influences in the history of the human mind. In that contrast itself is the moral which Greece has left us—nor can volumes more emphatically describe the triumph of the Intellectual over the Material. But as nations, resembling individuals, do not become illustrious from their mere physical proportions; as in both, renown has its moral sources; so in examining the causes which conduced to the eminence of Greece, we cease to wonder at the insignificance of its territories, or the splendour of its fame. Even in geographical circumstance Nature had endowed the country of the Hellenes with gifts which amply atoned the narrow girth of its confines. The most southern part of the continent of Europe, it

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contained within itself all the advantages of sea and land ; its soil, though unequal in its product, is for the most part fertile and abundant ; it is intersected by numerous streams, and protected by chains of mountains ; its plains and valleys are adapted to every product most necessary to the support of the human species ; and the sun that mellows the fruits of nature is sufficiently tempered not to relax the energies of man. Bordered on three sides by the sea, its broad and winding extent of coast early conduced to the spirit of enterprise ; and, by innumerable bays and harbours, offered every allurements to that desire of gain which is the parent of commerce and the basis of civilisation. At the period in which Greece rose to eminence it was in the very centre of the most advanced and flourishing states of Europe and of Asia. The attention of its earlier adventures was directed not only to the shores of Italy, but to the gorgeous cities of the East, and the wise and hoary institutions of Egypt. If from other nations they borrowed less than has been popularly supposed, the very intercourse with those nations alone sufficed to impel and develop the faculties of an imitative and youthful people ; while, as the spirit of liberty broke out in all the Grecian states, producing a restless competition both among



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the citizens in each city and the cities one with another, no energy was allowed to sleep until the operations of an intellect, perpetually roused and never crippled, carried the universal civilisation to its height. Nature herself set the boundaries of the river and the mountain to the confines of the several states—the smallness of each concentrated power into a focus—the number of all heightened emulation to a fever. The Greek cities had, therefore, above all other nations, the advantage of a perpetual collision of mind—a perpetual intercourse with numerous nations, with whom intellect was ever at work—with whom experiment knew no rest. Greece, taken collectively, was the only free country (with the exception of Phœnician states and colonies perhaps equally civilised) in the midst of enlightened despotisms; and in the ancient world, despotism invented and sheltered the arts which liberty refined and perfected. Thus considered, her greatness ceases to be a marvel—the very narrowness of her dominions (and, I would add, the serenity of her clime and aspect) was a principal cause of it—and to the most favourable circumstances of nature were added circumstances the most favourable of time.”

If the sight of those places around Jerusalem, with the names so familiar from childhood, had

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stirred in one a strange sense of unreality, that sense was even stronger here. Standing on the Acropolis, one sees, bounding the Attic plain, the violet-tinted range of Hymettus, renowned for wine and wild honey; Pentelicus, whence came the marble of its noble structures; and the wooded ridge of Parnes. Nearer, and to the east, is Mount Lycabettos, rising sharp and sheer, upon whose craggy summit was once a sanctuary of "Zeus most High." To the south-west slopes the Hill of Muses, surmounted by the monument of Philopappos, still not unwell preserved. Hewn in the bluff just beneath its crest are some rocky chambers, one of which is said to have been the prison of Socrates. The eye roves on to the lower eminence of Solon's Pnyx; and passing south-westward, under the Acropolis itself, lights upon the Areopagus, where the most venerable court of Athens used to sit in judgment. Beyond this lies the Hill of Nymphs, and over that a vista of the harbours, the gulf, with Salamis and all the islands. The track and traces of the Long Walls of Themistocles and Pericles can still be seen. Towards the sea, on either side of the city, flow the feeble but historic streams of Ilissus and Cephissus, upon whose caprices the ancient Athenians depended for so much. Sweeping on through

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west to north, one sees the best preserved of all the ancient temples—the Theseion, covering the bones of that great king and hero. Still on and further out in the plain is “divine Plato’s” Academe, and near to it the knoll of Colonus, the last retreat of blind Œdipus. Guides show the rock close by from which they pretend to believe that he was snatched up to the gods.

*μόρῳ δ' ὑποίῳ κείνος ὤλετ' οὐδ' ἂν εἰς  
 θνητῶν φημίσειε πλὴν τὸ Θησέως κῆρα.  
 οὐ γάρ τις αὐτὸν οὔτε πυρφόρος θεοῖ  
 κεραυνὸς ἐξέπραξεν οὔτε ποιτία  
 θέελλα κινηθεῖσα τῷ τότε ἐν χρόνῳ,  
 ἀλλ' ἢ τις ἐκ θεῶν πομπός, ἢ τὸ νετέρων  
 εὖνον διαστὰν γῆς ἀλύπητον βάθρον.  
 ἀνὴρ γὰρ οὐ στενακτὸς οὐδὲ σὺν νόσοις  
 ἀλγεινὸς ἐξεπέμπετ', ἀλλ' εἴ τις βροτῶν  
 θυμαστός.*

“ But, how the old man perished, save the king,  
 Mortal can ne'er divine ; for bolt, nor levin,  
 Nor blasting tempest from the ocean borne.  
 Was heard or seen ; but either was he rapt  
 Aloft by wings divine, or else the shades,  
 Whose darkness never looked upon the sun,  
 Yawned in grim mercy, and the rent abyss  
 Engulf'd the wanderer from the living world.”

And so the gaze travels on through north to east again, pausing on the Tower of the Winds, the monument of Lysicrates, Hadrian's Gate, and finally comes to rest on the fifteen stark colossal columns of the Olympeion.

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On the right-hand side as one goes up to the Propylae is the exquisite little Ionian temple of the "Wingless Victory." In after days, my friend Taft—whom I had not then met—described it as a "perfect peach."

Than the remains on the Acropolis, those of Egypt are more mighty, those of Rome more stately; but these stand alone in the beauty of their perfect elegance and grace. Of all that I saw there—the Propylaea, the Parthenon, adorned by the inspired hand of Phidias, the Erechtheion, the Museums, the Caryatides and many other things—I do not purpose to speak, for they cannot be of great interest to the majority of readers, while those to whom they are of interest must already know, or may read in countless volumes, far more than I can tell them.

That first morning I was quite alone on the Acropolis. The city below lay hushed, its strenuous day not yet begun. Far out, a few sails moved lazily over the peaceful bay, and here and there some grazing flocks indistinctly dotted the distant slopes. Mysteriously in the solemn silence those ruins seemed to take on their youthful shape—to live again. One seemed to see, flitting about them with noiseless feet, those men whose names will never die, and to

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hear again from these very stones which knew them, the whispered echoes of the thunder of their rhetoric and the sonorous roll of their soul-shaking tragedies.

And then there broke upon my reverie the very real voice of a still drowsy, uniformed custodian, angrily asking what I meant by climbing over the gate before the proper opening hour.

My fast diminishing store of gold allowed me to spend no more than one week in Athens, nor, to my grief, did it permit any visits to the neighbouring towns and localities of interest.

At that season, during the afternoons the sun was unpleasantly warm, and a dazzling glare struck up from the white-hot pavements. I used therefore to sit reading in the shady Zappeion gardens, waiting for the Museum to open, but with my mind dwelling more on the cool blue sea than the book in front of me. And then a little incident of schooldays would insidiously force itself upon my already wandering attention. It had been announced that on the occasion of King Edward's coronation we were to have a week's holiday. But on the very eve of our joyous departure came that sad news of illness which deprived us of our holiday and plunged the whole Empire into grief. There



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was, however, in our case, one mitigating circumstance which helped us to bear our disappointment with more than usual fortitude. By the time the blow fell, every man—we were all *men* at school—had in his pocket the “journey money” sent by his kind parents to take him home—so much net profit. Consequently, not a lament was heard, except from a few unfortunates who happened to live near by and so felt that they were not fairly compensated. Scottish fellows, on the other hand, displayed correspondingly greater resignation.

The headmaster, ignorant perhaps of that powerful anodyne to our sorrow, was so pleased with the quiet and dignified manner in which we had taken our loss, that he gave a whole day’s holiday, without even morning chapel to mar it.

Our house tutor generously seized this opportunity to take four or five of us on a pilgrimage to see Shakespeare’s house in Stratford-on-Avon.

We started off enthusiastically enough, for it was exhilarating to get right away for once from the daily round, the extra task, but as ill-luck would have it the day turned out to be one of the hottest ever known in England, and the railway journey soon became a grievous burden to the melting flesh. Presently, out



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of the window, we saw the Avon winding its placid way among green fields and under shady willows; and five pairs of eyes dwelt longingly upon its cool clear depths. But we sighed sadly, telling ourselves that it was not for us—we had not been brought so many miles for frivolities of that kind. Then an astonishing thing happened. The tutor asked, in an abstracted, non-committal sort of way, if we would rather bathe than visit Shakespeare's house. Now in spite of all that philosophers have said about the sturdy independence of schoolboys, there is no class so bound down by rigid rules of form, none whose line of conduct is prescribed by such clearly defined and inflexible limits. It follows that he is easily shocked. The unorthodoxy of this question therefore startled us considerably. We didn't suppose for a moment that it was seriously meant, and so it put us in a very awkward position, for if we said we would rather see Shakespeare's house we should be telling a lie, of which, we knew instinctively, the lack of sincerity in our voices must at once convict us—and it is bad form to tell lies at school. On the other hand, we shrank from the ingratitude of saying we would rather bathe, when we had been taken all that way to see so hallowed

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a locality. So we looked from one to another, fidgeting and giggling uneasily. I remember still the light in our mentor's eye as he watched us, knowing well what was passing in our minds. At last, noticing a smile lurking about the corners of his mouth, one of us, giving early promise of that temerity which has since gained him the coveted decoration that he wears on his "jacket," burst out, "We'd rather bathe, sir."

We eagerly seconded him and then sat silent and abashed, awed at our presumption, till to our surprise the tutor broke into hearty laughter with an unmistakable ring of relief in it, and replied, "All right, we'll bathe, then."

Years afterwards he told me he had taken many boys on the same excursion and at the last moment offered them the unconventional alternative of a swim; but we were the only ones who had dared to accept it, though all those others must have longed for the river every bit as much as we did—for boy in summer is an amphibious animal.

And so, detecting the note of relief in his laugh, I began to learn at an early age that it is not always positively wicked to follow the bent of one's own natural inclinations, even though on the face of it they appear opposed to the immemorial customs and prejudices of one's class.

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Each afternoon as I sat reading in those gardens there, the memory of that little episode came stealing over and gradually took possession of the whole imagination. It brought about at length a weighing in the balance of the rival attractions of the Museum and the sea—elements so different that it was difficult to fix a standard of comparison between them—and more often than otherwise the decision was in favour of the sea. Once taken it was immediately acted upon. An electric tram conveniently stopped at the very gate of the gardens, whence it carried one in about the space of twenty-five minutes to Phaleron. That ride was rarely enjoyable, since one always had to stand up the whole distance, so inadequate was the service to the demand upon it. Standing in itself would have been no very great hardship, even for so long a time as that, had not the standing room also been packed, chiefly with women, the serrated edges of whose monstrous hats were liable to do one grievous injury. The gallant Greek himself, wearied with the noble exertion of winning daily bread, naturally permits himself to take the only seat, while his wife and daughter sway and stagger about the floor.

Phaleron is on the bay next before Piræus. It consists of one row, about half a mile long, of

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hotels and cafés, and in front of that a wide, pleasurable promenade along the sea front, from which project a pier and an enormous swimming-bath. The rank and fashion of Athens drive out there in the evenings and cluster in variegated groups around the café tables. From the narrow belt of sandy shore just below them, bathe a great uncovered army of economical urchins who wish to spare themselves the expense of entrance to the baths or the hire of a costume. When I was there the entire Greek navy lolled majestically at anchor just beyond the pier. At first one marvelled to see hoary-headed, decrepit old men in command of the destroyers, till one remembered that in a fleet so diminutive promotion must necessarily be deadly slow.

The baths were irreproachable in all respects save one; they had no diving board, and the only method of egress to the ocean was down a flight of steps from one's own cabin and through the network of the understructure. This method has its drawbacks, as I discovered on my first attempt. Under the most favourable circumstances the hole through which one descends the steps is so narrow that one can only get into the water feet foremost, inch by inch—a procedure far from pleasant. I was just beginning to creep

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down the steps in this undignified manner, when I was smitten by an odour of overwhelming pungency. Hastily withdrawing my feet, I peered down into the gloom and saw there a swollen, bloated carcass gently thud-thudding against the lowest step. Here and there patches of fur had rubbed off the distended skin. There was not room for both of us there, so I dressed again with unprecedented rapidity and sought another cabin, thinking hard things about Phaleron ; though, of course, little accidents of that kind might happen anywhere.

One morning there was a tense excitement in the air, an indefinable sense of expectation. From the great square outside, the restless murmuring of a gathering crowd gradually dispelled my waking dreams—half voluntary, half involuntary—and I arose and went out on the balcony to see what all the stir could mean. It appeared to be the opening of Parliament. At the face of the square remote from my coign of vantage was the Chamber of Deputies itself. A flight of broad marble steps down from it gave on to a terrace, and from the terrace a further flight of similar steps led down to the square. The other three sides of the square were lined with infantry ; and behind the infantry was drawn up a single rank of cavalry. Upon

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the portico of the Chamber stood a squad of the Royal Bodyguard in Greek national dress. The terrace and the square were empty, while behind the walls of soldiers surged the growing mob. Every window and every balcony was thronged. At the end of an eternity the ranks opposite the Chamber opened and, amid an impressive silence, the Members slowly filed in and walked through the empty square with profound solemnity, the ranks closing again as the last one passed through. No sooner had these great men disappeared into the House, than there arose a sudden commotion in the cavalry. Horses plunged and reared; hoofs and accoutrements rattled noisily; a rider was thrown. The crowd began to shout. Then a line of infantry bulged inward—broke; and half a dozen wild, stalwart ruffians in picturesque kilted knickers and rough tanned jack boots, burst through and, whooping, dashed up towards the Chamber. Some horsemen galloped after them in hot pursuit. The cries of the crowd became frantic. The horses slipped, slid and fell with a clatter on the steps. The ruffians gained the terrace and sped on up the steps of the Chamber itself. There, at the very entrance, they were met by the bayonets of the Bodyguard—an ugly, gleaming breast-high barrier. So delirious became the populace that

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the military could only with the utmost difficulty keep back its frenzied mass. Then, seeing that further advance was impossible, the disturbers of the peace laughingly turned away and leisurely walked down the steps again, while the onlookers burst into loud cheers.

It was the annual farce of the Cretan Deputies. As everybody knows, after a long series of rebellions and bloody reprisals, the Powers interfered in Crete; and although they guaranteed it an autonomous administration under the suzerainty of Turkey, they yet refused its dearest wish, namely, that it should be annexed to Greece. For in that island flows the oldest and purest blood of Greece. By way of protest against this, as they consider, cruel injustice, the Cretans send, or try to send, their Deputies to the Grecian Chamber every year, with, one is told, the entire sympathy of the Greek Government and people, who, nevertheless, dare not receive them. And so they are either intercepted *en route* to Athens, and sent back to their homes, or, if they have so far managed to elude the vigilance of the authorities, they contrive to make a scene such as I was fortunate enough to witness.

According to modern ideas of entertainment, Athens is singularly insipid. It is a clean, whole-

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some place, where, as far as the casual observer can see, all women are honest, and there are no distractions to tempt husbands from the paths of virtue. Far be it from me to disparage so praiseworthy a state of affairs; but at the same time all those innocent forms of amusement which abound in other capitals are lacking here, and an air of depression pervades the entire people.

At night, two centres of attraction draw to themselves what would appear to be the whole population. These are the square in which the Deputy-drama was played, and the Zappeion terrace. A vast expanse of chairs and tables occupy every inch of space, at which are seated the more respectable classes who can afford to pay for refreshment, and are thus enabled to watch in comfort the inevitable cinematograph. Each café has its own particular performance thrown on a screen supported between a pair of upright posts at various corners of the square. More prudent, or less thirsty people, who have the good fortune to inhabit conveniently situated houses, look on from their own balconies and windows, while a jostling army of the standing proletariat charges from one point of vantage to another at the conclusion of each piece.

Looking there upon that multitude of



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humanity, one saw every type of Greek, and the uniformity of figure and physique was very noticeable. The men are handsome, broad and powerful, but very short and inclined to stoutness; the women, not beautiful. The infusion of an inferior blood is most pronounced in their swarthy skins, as are the centuries of subjugation in their subdued demeanour. Among the crowd are many ragged figures of soldiers. Their officers, sitting at the tables, are little less slovenly. They wear toy swords, like children's playthings, ill-fitting clothes—as indeed do all the civilians as well—and unspeakable boots. There is no surer criterion of the status of individuals or nations than the boots they wear—and there is a splendid opening for a bootmaker in Athens.

They take their pleasures sadly, these Athenians. One could not help thinking how colourless their homes must be that they should leave them to see this cinematograph, for the pieces are not amusing, not instructive, not melodramatic, not disgusting; just intolerably dull, like the spiritless people who come to watch them. Sometimes, as must happen, the machine would break down for awhile, and the great concourse used to sit waiting in the darkness without a movement or a murmur, in almost awesome

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silence, for any length of time, till the light came on again. For this dignity and reserve one must have admired them, had one not suspected that it was merely the outcome of apathy.

A pathetic suggestion of the "has been" oppresses the whole place. Perhaps some dim atavistic stirring in their blood, some vague sub-consciousness of what they were and what they are, shames any ebullition of spirits. Looking up to the Acropolis far above, they see the Parthenon—the witchery of the moon, shining through its fairy columns, transforming it into a thing of phantom beauty, unreal, ethereal, the ghost of History; and they must ever feel the sad reproach of those sublime piles, so long since dead.

## CHAPTER XIV

### TO CONSTANTINOPLE

**A**T the end of my all too short sojourn in Athens, the Dardanelles very considerably reopened, so I took ship to Constantinople without delay, lest they, with their usual vacillation, should take the notion to close again. Strictly speaking, my existence of scavenging and vagabondage ended here, for henceforward I travelled in countries where one's passport has to be shown at every turn; and I felt that an appearance of at least passing decency was due from a person who bore upon his the Lion and the Unicorn. Moreover, the voice of prudence whispered that it would be as well to make one's exterior correspond as closely as possible with the description of it, if I did not wish to excite suspicion in that country of mediæval methods, where, I still believed, unpopular people were apt mysteriously to disappear—to evanesce, as it were, and be no more seen. So, to my secret satisfaction,

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the third class and the steerage knew me not again.

The instant I set eyes on our ship, I knew without being told that it was the oldest afloat. It was long and straight, like a woman without any semblance of a figure. The funnel was flat-sided, like an up-ended railway foot-warmer, and nearly hidden beneath a coarse and gnarled parasitical overgrowth. Instead of portholes, it had great square iron plates, with a small bull's-eye in the middle of them, so that in rough weather, when the plates could not be propped open, no daylight ever penetrated its musty interior. From an economic point of view, it was badly designed, for a lot of valuable space amidships was only occupied by its naked engines, whose function was rather to keep the crew's dinner warm than propulsion. At any hour of the day or night you could see on them a long row of smoking, savoury platters. Once I tried the bath, but it was an unfortunate venture, for that luxury of life had long since fallen into desuetude for purposes of human ablution, though there were unmistakable signs of its being in daily use as a sink. But the strangest feature of all, and one that—I don't know why—caused me much uneasiness, was the promenade deck. This was made of asphalt, and I could never

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walk upon that composition, so uncanny at sea, without a weird sensation, amounting almost to depression.

I was not the only one among the passengers who was anxious about the safety of our phantom ship. During the first meal on board, a lady who sat next to me was looking nervously around at the mouldy upright pillars which seemed to support the ceiling above our heads. Presently, seeing with a start, one, thicker than the others, slanting up at an angle more alarming than that of the leaning tower of Pisa, she clutched my arm and pointed at it, screaming hysterically, "Look, look, monsieur! The roof will fall! the roof will fall!" On that one point, at any rate, I was able to set her mind at rest, for the cause of her agitation was only the butt of the mast.

A spruce, beef-faced English steward, ludicrously out of place on such a galleon, told me that it was going to be broken up if it ever reached home—that this was its last voyage. It must have been the hand of Providence alone that its every one for the last fifty years had not been so.

For the first evening we steered a delightful course over the stilly sea, studded with a myriad tiny islands; but, unhappily, after the sun had

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set there rose no moon to trace with silver finger the outline of each little world, and so I went early to bed, since we were expected to reach Smyrna before the break of day.

My other three cabin companions, fully dressed, were already snoring on their bunks when I pulled the curtains and settled down for a long, long sleep. Hardly, it seemed, had I fallen asleep, when a strange and unusual feeling awoke me. The light was on, and I saw a foot, connected with the berth above, resting on my knee. Its pressure increased, and slowly and tentatively another foot began to descend. Still only half awake, I watched this phenomenon with semi-conscious interest. The first foot then pressing harder and harder to test its support, the second alighted alongside; and thence the process was reversed to gain the floor. I dozed off again, but was roused a few minutes later by an animated conversation. Through the chink in the curtains I saw two men with a basket of strawberries in front of them, feverishly eating against each other, each holding a tooth-glass in his hand, wherein he rapidly rinsed the fruit, and then flung the stalks into our only washing basin. The third man sat up in his bunk, looking hungrily on and chattering like a monkey, while the other two kept up a

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continuous growling undertone, suggestive of the Zoo at feeding time. It was not yet one o'clock, and indignant at this unwarrantable outrage, I sat up, drew the curtains and glared out at them. "*Bon jour, monsieur, bon jour,*" they said politely. I looked pointedly at my wrist-watch, then at them and replied, "*Bon soir,*" and sank back on the pillows again. After that they had the decency to put out the light and remove their horrid orgie elsewhere.

Our arrival in port was retarded several hours by the caution with which it was necessary to thread our way among the mines laid down for the welcome of the Italian fleet. Our engines had stopped altogether when I came up on deck, and a universal excitement prevailed. Some way ahead was another vessel, also motionless, from which everybody was hastening in life-boats. We learned that its intrepid captain had pushed ahead, contrary to regulations, without a pilot, and had inadvertently run straight on top of one of the said mines. It was, we were told, touch and go whether he and his ship might not at any moment soar skywards; and I fancy each of us had deep, deep down within him a sternly repressed, fiendish half-formed hope that we might be treated to so exceptional a spectacle. Eventually, amid our more or less

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sincere exclamations of thanksgiving, the unhappy ship safely disembarassed itself, and it and we once more proceeded on our way. If the captain and those that had to remain on board were at all imaginative, their feelings must have been far from enviable, and they are not likely to forget that hour or two for a very considerable time ; for no misery is so acute as the inactive suspense of uncertainty.

Without further trouble we steamed up the lake-like gulf, enclosed by low green hills, into the harbour.

Smyrna is the place where the figs come from ; also where Homer composed his poems. It appeared to be peopled with the usual heterogeneous Levantine scum, and has the rough, narrow, dirty streets common to all Oriental towns. And yet one was surprised to see the number of its modern, not unimposing commercial houses and hotels. Long caravans of camels wind into its dark bazaars, laden with costly stuffs from Mesopotamia ; and they sell there, too, embroidered silks and richly woven textures, worked by the lovely dark-eyed houris of the Imperial seraglio.

On the slopes outside the city, among the pines, nestle the homes of many English and other Europeans, whose life is daily spiced with



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the ever-present chance of being plundered by brigands.

Towards evening the wretched old ship began to wheeze and pant its way out to sea again, moving in the manner of some asthmatic and gouty old man, till one's heart bled for its painful exertions.

I was leaning over the stern, watching the slowly blurring face of the receding town that had come into my life for a few hours, and now was surely passing out of it again for all time, when a man near by, who seemed similarly preoccupied, turned and, jerking his thumb over his shoulder, addressed me—

“It's sure a bum place.”

Although not quite certain what that polished phrase might mean, I nodded assent, for his tone was not that of argument, but of stating a positive fact. The ice broken, we almost immediately fell into a deep discussion on the laws of sex as affected by modern social conditions—and there began an intimacy which grew and ripened throughout the remainder of the Expedition.

My new-found friend was frail and long and lean. Long and lean was he, with stooping shoulders, hollow chest, long lean arms and long lean fingers. His dark hair, which had begun

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to recede towards the crown, fell bountifully behind in crisp half curls, and his head was finely shaped, as were his chin and aquiline nose. A sallowness of cheek, a want of colour in the eyes and a certain indeterminateness about the mouth, robbed this face of a beauty it almost possessed. The sound of his voice was a soft and pleasing Southern drawl, but the idioms of his speech were the very latest thing in Northern slang—vigorously expressive once one had learned to understand them. He could tell far more vividly in one short, forceful sentence the meaning that a scholar would labour over sheets of foolscap to convey. I believe it was an affectation; that he took a perverse delight in using ugly, exaggerated forms of slang, for he was a thorough artist, widely read and had all the finesse of the French tongue completely at his command. His name was unpronounceable, so I called him Taft, because he was American—it was not really clever; and, as I said before, we soon became great friends, for our natures were so different that they seemed to dovetail, and we were eminently suited to each other as travelling companions. As a raconteur he was a heaven-born genius; never have I met any one who could tell the stories of the past, or describe sights and scenes or plays and books with such

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extraordinary clearness. While he spoke, his words carved out like a sculpture before my eyes the picture that was in his mind. He spoke of his home, his hopes and aims, his achievements and all those things of which we are taught not to speak, with simple frankness and total absence of false modesty. But his greatest joy of all was to exercise his wonderful gift—which of course he knew quite well that he possessed—and it pleased him as much to tell me the stories of his student days in Paris, his country and his people, as it did me to listen to them. At first, I thought that I ought to contribute my share to the entertainment, so tried to tell him all the most thrilling tales of wine and women and war that I knew; but, though he politely appeared to listen, he was not interested, nor was I, and so for the future all talk was of his life and experiences, for that amused us both much more.

As far as one could judge, the veracity of his reminiscences was very moderate; and, although I knew that he considered the Truth is generally either too insipid or too intoxicating, his fancy was nevertheless well weighted with a substantial ballast of it before he let it flutter free through the fairyland of his imagination.

An architect by profession, he was ostensibly

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travelling for the purpose of studying those ancient works whose glory no modern people has yet been able to excel, and on the model of which most public monuments are still designed. But I gathered he too had something that he wanted to forget.

Far on in the night we parted, each to his respective place, for Taft was first-class; and I was glad to have my musty hole all to myself, as the desecrators of repose had gone off at Smyrna.

The next morning I nearly came to a sad end. I was resignedly shaving in the narrow shaft of light that struggled into the cavernous gloom through the propped-out iron plate which did duty for a porthole. When we were approaching the entrance of the Dardanelles, a sudden bump, crash and hubbub arose outside. I at once craned my head out of the aperture to see the cause. At the same instant a murderous boat-hook whizzed within an inch of my nose and gripped on to the prop. I could scarcely dart back my head before the rotten prop bent double, gave way, and the heavy plate with its absurd bull's-eye fell to with a hideous clang that shook the whole cabin and brought down a shower of stalactites, stalagmites, rusty screws and rivets from all sides and prehistoric insects from their long hidden lairs. It seemed that the

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pilot, having failed to board at the proper place, clutched at the first straw, and left it but a broken reed. I was only too thankful that a head in which I took some interest had not been involved in the general ruin.

In the early hours, while I was yet resting, an Italian gunboat had stopped and searched us for contraband of war ; but it naturally refrained from disturbing the slumbers of so great a Power, and so I missed what was said to have been quite an amusing episode.

Once again we had to go warily on account of mines, with which the entrance to the Dardanelles was thickly sown. Two forts guard its portals, from whose grim and almost invisible counterescarps we could just see the black gaping mouths of hungry cannon.

Some way in lay the battle fleet of Turkey. A sporting mutiny was in progress at that time, for the junior officers and men demanded to be led out against the foe, while the seniors and, no doubt, the British instructors, refused to commit that suicidal folly.

The Hellespont is like a broad calm river, less than a mile across, with green woods and fields on the gentle slopes at either side. Still further on we were shown the traces of Sestos and Abydos, those two towns that played so

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great a part in the history of olden days. Leander nightly used to swim across to the arms of his Hero—a feat more recently emulated by Byron, but without the incentive of a so sweet reward. Xerxes spanned the water between these two points with his famous bridge—from which it derives its name, for the attempted conquest of Greece, and later Alexander did the same for the march of his victorious armies into Asia.

After some hours we emerged into the landlocked Sea of Marmora, and the interest of our surroundings diminished with the receding shores; so the rest of the day was spent in listening to Taft.

The Bosphorus and Golden Horn were very delightful. We came in just at sunset, and all the forest of delicate domes and minarets, robed in languidly floating vapours, looked like the dream-city of some fairy tale. Gradually we began to distinguish the houses, all among the trees, extending down to within a few feet of, and then standing sheer above, the water's edge. We soon learned that the vapours which enshrouded the town were the ghosts of a terrible fire that had been raging through the wooden dwellings, leaving awful ruin in its track. On all sides, in every space, little white tents were rising to shelter the victims of the holocaust.

## CHAPTER XV

### CONSTANTINOPLE

**O**UT of the afore-mentioned respect to the Arms on my passport, and also from meaner considerations of my own miserable safety, I chose a hotel of unquestioned respectability, the cheapest of that category. Taft, on the other hand, made for the most palatial of them all, where he had engaged a suite of rooms in advance.

Constantinople is composed of two distinct parts. One is the ancient and original town of Stamboul, whose site was marked out with the inspired lance of Constantine, on that triangle of ground bounded on two sides by the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn respectively. The other, on the north of the Golden Horn, is the more modern part, comprising the quarters of Galata and Pera, where the hotels, banks, commercial houses and consulates are situated.

The drive up was disappointing, for the modern town was much the same as other

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unimportant European towns, except that the roads were less even and more dirty, and there was a total absence of any control over the traffic. Not a motor was to be seen, doubtless on account of the poor state of the said roads. One noticed a broad-minded spirit of advancement in the women. Many, even of the higher classes, were unveiled, and I at least was surprised to see how fair were the majority of men. Four centuries in that serene clime had all but purged the Arab blood of the darker strains.

Numbers of shops, bearing Italian names, were closed and deserted, for their owners had been given the option of becoming naturalised Turkish subjects or leaving the country. To their honour, be it said, that practically without exception they took the latter course, though in most cases it must have meant total ruin. This pathetic sight brought home to one that sadder side of war which we English, who are never altogether free from war, are yet seldom called upon to witness.

After dinner Taft descended from Olympus to my humble earth, and we set out together in search of diversion, under the guidance of a venerable, grey-bearded hall-porter. With slow and dignified steps this sedate old man led us through streets lit and animated in Western



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fashion to a remarkably low café chantant. He declared, however, it was the best in Constantinople. Inside it poor old painted horrors, with stiff limbs and strident, metallic voices, painfully pirouetted and squalled old songs that had been current in the Quarter ten years ago, while all around sat the Terrible Turk, Young and Old, making ugly leers. During the performance a thoroughly drunken Italian, who had somehow escaped the expulsion of his kind, lurched up against our table and started abusing us. He was, we gathered, dissatisfied with the attitude of perfidious Albion towards the war. Well aware that the wise man never tries to reason with a woman or a drunkard, we called a waiter and told him to remove the obstruction. Our vinous aggressor then swore by many gods and saints and devils that we had robbed him of all his possessions. But if we were strangers there he apparently was not, for no heed was paid to his wild accusations, and he was ejected with an adroitness which the seven-foot "chuckers-out" of the "Empire" might well have envied.

Unnecessarily early the following morning Taft came around to call for me, accompanied by a whimsical rogue who had undertaken to show us everything there was to be seen from sheer affection—almost, he protested, at a loss

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to himself. If any there be who reads so far, he will already know that not the least part of my amusement while travelling was derived from the society of these parasites, whom I usually endeavoured to cultivate and draw out, for one found in a class which lived by its own wits on the lack of them in others, a certain crude philosophy that was highly edifying. This particular rascal was no exception to the rule; he was, in fact, the choicest specimen we ever fell in with, and added greatly to the delectation of our stay in Constantinople. In appearance he was of middle height, well built, and of a rich olive complexion. He wore a neat lounge suit, fez, patent leather boots with light grey tops and a heavy rolled gold chain, to which was attached a tin Waterbury watch of colossal magnitude and thunderous tick. On first acquaintance he immediately presented us with his card, bearing a very lengthy Turkish name, and giving his address as care of the British Embassy. But as the proportion of vowels to consonants in the name was about one to five, we soon gave up all hope of ever mastering it, and called him Percy for short. He told us, too, that we were bound to like him immensely—all the English did, because he was a great joker, and no end of dog with the girls. For the latter we simply had his

## Constantinople

word, but he daily gave evidence of the former quality, always thoughtfully warning us before he was going to begin joking—otherwise we might never have known.

Percy insisted on a carriage. He said the distances were far too great, as were also the heat and his dignity, to think of walking. There was no heat at all, the climate being extraordinarily mild for that time of the year, but we tacitly recognised the consideration due to the last factor and so made the concession, not without a touch of inward joy.

Our carriage was drawn by a pair of chestnut Arab ponies, well groomed and in excellent condition. Indeed, I have never seen any other town except Buda Pesth where the animals of hackney vehicles appeared to be so well cared for—a fact which showed the survival of at least one desert characteristic in this now more or less civilised people.

We were first of all taken to the Tower of Galata and asked to climb up its interminable spiral staircase. However, the labour is well rewarded, for one views from its summit a superb panorama—the embodiment of McWhirter's "Constantinople and the Golden Horn." We slowly walked around the turret while Percy indicated the mosques, the palaces

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and the buildings of note. He also pointed out the route by which the Young Turks had come from Salonika over the hills behind, and many places of carnage during the Revolution of four years ago. We asked him if he had taken any part in the fighting. "No, sir, I not leave my house once all that time," he replied with great emphasis.

It happened to be Friday, the Mahomedan sabbath, so we went next to see the Sultan driving in state to the mosque for prayers. As we reached the Palace about half an hour too early, we lined up on the roadside with a few other carriages, containing mostly tourists like ourselves, and beguiled the time in listening to Percy's prattle. Needless to say, he soon broke out into a diatribe. "agin the government." The Young Turks were worse than the Old—the port was always closed upon some pretext or other and no business ever came—everything was going to the dogs. Then his tune changed to a panegyric of England. "Long vive the English!" he cried. This roused Taft. "See here," he said, "what about the Americans?" Percy looked at him cunningly. "No, sir, you not make laugh at me. I know you real English."

Whether Taft was pleased or angry will

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never be known, because there was nothing for it but to laugh. Personally I have never been able to discover whether Americans have any real patriotism outside their own particular cities. Noticing an awkwardness in the air, Percy tactfully changed the subject and pointed out the Harem. "This Sultan," he said, "has seven wives and a hundred assistant wives; the last one had three hundred and sixty-five," and he added with a touch of bitterness, "I have only three."

Next he begged me to take him to England with me.

"But," I said, "you couldn't have three wives there, Percy."

"All right," he answered cheerfully, "I take one and sell other two."

Our attention was now diverted to a stirring in the street. First a cavalry regiment clattered up and lined both sides from the gate towards the mosque. It was mounted on a good sort of stuggy little horse, well trained and showing some breeding of a Southern Russian strain. Then infantry began to arrive and gradually prolonged the line right up to the entrance of the mosque. Meanwhile high officers of state and court officials kept cantering from the Imperial stables towards the Palace, for the

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most part riding beautiful blood Arabs. Outside the gates, in the middle of the road, was expectantly drawn up the Royal Bodyguard, a smartly turned out corps in a gorgeous blue and silver uniform of Empire hussar style. Except a certain number of tourists, there were few spectators; the inhabitants did not turn out in great numbers to see their sovereign. Presently there was a flourish of trumpets. A sharp word of command rang out; the infantry froze rigid; the escort stiffened in their saddles; the Golden Gates swung open, and, seated alone in his carriage, issued the Emperor of the Ottomans, the Caliph of Islam. This poor old gentleman, who had exchanged one prison for another less peaceful, looked very aged and frail. He wore a simple uniform, a dark blue frock coat lightly laced with gold and unadorned by stars or orders. His hair and beard were silvery white, and his aspect refined and dignified, as he acknowledged the feeble cheering of the soldiery. As guests in his capital, we too removed our hats. The troops, of course, cheered by word of command, but we were a little surprised to see that the huzzas of those few subjects who were present seemed genuine enough; and shouting with the loudest of them was our seditionist Percy. The sight of regal

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majesty had for the moment carried them away, which rather bore out Gibbon's remark that "all mankind is governed by names."

In the afternoon we crossed the Golden Horn into Stamboul and visited the mosque of St. Sophia.

We must look back a moment to that fateful day, the 29th of May, 1453, when Mahomed Ali, brilliant, vigorous and cruel, at last succeeded in entering the city which he had so long been beleaguering, by the superhuman artifice of transporting his fleet ten miles overland. He was thereby enabled to pour a hail of shot into the walls from both sides; nor were the deep Western galleys able to reach or silence his smaller craft in the shallow water from which they were dealing such murderous destruction. Rent by internal discords, jealousies and religious dissensions, the defence of the city had throughout been ill-organised and half-hearted. And now, appalled by this supernatural development, the defenders lost what little spirit they had previously shown, and offered but a feeble resistance to the final overwhelming onrush of the fanatical and lustful Turks. The city fell, and on the outer wall, beneath a mound of dead, was found the body of noble Palæologus, whose conduct alone shines brightly forth from that

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black welter of treachery and cowardice. "The distress and fall of the last Constantine are more glorious than the long prosperity of the Byzantine Caesars."

The inhabitants, who should have manned the walls and conquered or died beside their Emperor, instead flocked trembling with their women and the monks into the Church of St. Sophia. Not on their arms and courage did they place their reliance, but on a prophecy that an angel of the Lord would descend from heaven and with flaming sword drive back the Turks from that sacred dome, out of Europe, back to the Euphrates again. So, all unopposed, the victors burst in and drove off the men and monks in slavery, while the women exchanged their life of home and convent for the doubtful pleasures of a harem. Next the conquerors despoiled St. Sophia of the precious oblations of centuries, till the Sultan himself arrived on the scene and ordained that all symbols of Christianity should be thrown down, and that the walls, which were covered with images and mosaics, should be "washed, purified and restored to a naked simplicity," meet for the worship of Allah and His prophet. Thus it was that the church of Constantine in which we stood became a mosque of Islam.



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The architect soul of Taft was enraptured at the sublime interior. An impressive sense of vast space is produced by the succession of rising half-domes, culminating in the great and complete central one. Its light, too, is full and clear, yet soft. From many pulpits imams were preaching to long motley lines of kneeling worshippers. At the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, repeated crescendo by a choir on a raised platform, every head bowed to the floor, giving a curious spectacular effect from behind. There was an air of simple unaffected reverence about the congregation which redeemed these prostrations from the ridiculous, and for which one might look in vain among the churches of other creeds. Something about them too struck us as very unusual; we could not fix on what that something was for some time, till at last it dawned on us that most of the worshippers were in rags and tatters. One never sees rags and tatters in our cathedrals at home; people would be so shocked. I doubt even if they would be admitted. We remarked among other things that there were quite a number of women present. Now the Qoran does not encourage women to attend services, lest their fair presence should distract the attention of the male worshippers and fill their

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minds with unholy thoughts. At the same time, while allotting to them a very special hell, it yet distinctly states that an undefined heaven of sorts also exists for women. Nevertheless, in India at any rate, the general superstition is that women have no souls and cannot go to Paradise. Anxious, therefore, to learn what the Turkish, the Headquarter, idea on this subject might be, I questioned Percy if they had souls and could go to heaven.

"No, sir, they are all devils and go to hell," he replied, promptly and with conviction.

Poor Percy! Marriage must indeed be a hazardous affair if he had drawn no less than three blanks.

Leaving St. Sophia, we visited many other mosques and found in each much the same scene being enacted. Outside that of Achmed we sat down, at Percy's instigation, to drink a cup of coffee. While thus innocently employed, we suddenly noticed that Percy's prattle ceased and his face became set and rigid. Following the direction of his staring eyes, we saw that they were fixed on an approaching figure, short and stout, with evil leering eyes and sensual lips, like some licentious satyr. It -- the approaching figure -- was garbed as a priest of the mosque. As he passed by us, Percy

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spat at him. The priest spat back and proceeded on his way. After this interchange of courtesy, we asked Percy what it was all about. He told us that a few days previously the priest had been charged for a bestial assault upon a little girl of seven years old. The magistrate, ordering him only to be flogged, allowed him to resume his duties in the mosque, and he was again preaching to the congregation of the way in which they should go.

After a day or two Taft came over to live at my humble hotel, and was duly sworn in as a member of the Expedition. Just opposite that edifice were some public gardens, where a military band played, and all the fashionable society resorted in the evenings. We too used to go over to watch the people, and imbibe a drop or two of "snake-juice," as Taft poetically called all spiritous liquors. As a matter of fact, my "snake-juice" consisted of a cup of coffee, as that was the most satisfactory method of quenching thirst, since it only cost twopence and a large glass of water was given in with it; for at this juncture the state of the privy purse gave rise to grave apprehension. Beer was now a thing of the past, and tobacco an unknown luxury.

We never passed any of the smaller coins

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without a sense of surprise and relief, for anything less like money would be impossible to imagine. The "mettelick" and its fractions and multiples are discs of flimsy tin, dented and battered this way and that, till it is incredible that any sane person would accept them. One could make any amount of them oneself out of milk and meat tins, only the tins intact would probably be the more valuable.

Much confusion, too, arose in our minds and watches over the local time, till we discovered that it was regulated daily by the hour of sunrise; after which discovery we gave up trying to cope with it at all.

Very leisurely we visited all the things that are advertised in the guide books and many others that are not. One day we went to the renowned bazaar. It consists of thirty-six covered-in streets of shops wherein are all manner of goods for sale, varying from large quantities of the ordinary Turkish shoe to exquisite inlaid wares of Damascus and rich carpets from far-away Bokhara.

Another time we took a drive right around those massive walls which ought to have kept the Turks for ever out of Europe. Beyond them is the cemetery. A forest of tombstones extends for miles and miles over the gentle

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undulations, overshadowed by calm sad cypress trees, the whole effect being ineffably peaceful and of a quiet sombre beauty. The tombstones themselves are very quaint; they are tall, flat and narrow, crowned with a fez for men, or a scroll for women.

The last part of this drive brought us through the poorer quarter of Stamboul, where some festival was going on, and crowds swarmed through the narrow streets. Again we could not help remarking the fair freshness of complexion and the total absence of fanaticism, or even bigotry. Nearly all the women had raised their veils, and the men were partaking freely of alcoholic liquors. The houses were squalid in the extreme and built of wood. Formerly all sanitary measures were left entirely to a great army of pariah dogs; but their extinction was decided upon, and a few years ago they ceased to exist, a fact which the good inhabitants of those mean dwellings seemed to have forgotten, judging by the disgusting state of the streets.

Percy had only one answer to our frequent enquiry, "Where shall we go now?" He invariably replied: "To the sweet waters of Europe." We begged him to tell us what they were, but he only tantalisingly shook his

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head and smiled in a far-away manner, as though picturing unspeakable joys. But we managed somehow to put it off as long as possible. I think we felt uneasily in our hearts that we were unworthy. One morning, however, we awoke exceptionally strong and cheery and, on receiving from Percy the usual reply to our daily question, we decided that the glad morn had come when we might venture to investigate this hidden source of bliss, too great for mortal tongue, which woke in Percy's eyes such wonders of languorous delight. So we set forth with a deliciously mysterious air of adventure, as if voyaging to Avalon or the Elysian Fields. The journey was long. First we had to drive down to the Stamboul Bridge, and thence we took a pleasure steamer, which stolidly plashed its way up the Golden Horn, covering us with smuts the while. It was the crooked and narrow path. At the end of about an hour our anticipation was reaching its climax ; we feared if nothing happened very soon it might begin to wane. Then our busy little boat put into a pier with tremendous fuss and churning of the waters. Gently insinuating us ashore, Percy beckoned us to follow and led on in silence, with the reverential awe of a high priest for the holy of holies, to the threshold of his shrine.

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We stood and gazed in silence—a silence as blasphemous as Percy's had been reverential. We saw an unassuming, insignificant stream, with a few rowing boats upon its surface, and deserted paths and ornamental flower-beds about its banks. The waters were called "sweet" because they were not salt — "of Europe" because, strangely enough, they were in Europe. That's all there was in it. Our friend had obviously just been hypnotised by the sound of the words, "The sweet waters of Europe."

Dotted about the Sea of Marmora are "Les îles des Princes," a number of small islands upon which the well-to-do inhabitants reside during the summer months. One day we made a more satisfactory excursion to the biggest of them, known by the burlesque name of Prinkipo. This time our vessel was larger and more comfortable, and the voyage, very like the one from Naples to Capri, far pleasanter than that of our late unhappy enterprise. During the course of it Percy pointed out to us a tiny island where the pariah dogs, to the number of a million, had been transported and killed for the sake of their skins. When their civil office was abolished, they were made over to a company of Frenchmen who undertook to exterminate them in return for their carcasses. The facts and figures

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are Percy's; while repeating them, I disclaim any responsibility for their accuracy. Many people were going out to the islands, and many travelled from one to another. On arrival at the first of them, Percy remarked, "Climate very clean; ladies go in water without any clothes, same as Europe." Then, fearing he had been indiscreet, he hastened to add, "Excuse me, sirs, excuse me very much, excuse me very much indeed."

Leaving there, we were soon able to see the snow-clad peak of Mysian Olympus, and shortly afterwards landed on our Prinkipo. A very enjoyable day was passed there, which included a drive around the entire circumference of the island. It has a soft and balmy air; cool, dark pinewoods clothe the slopes, and there is a luxuriant though sober vegetation reaching down to where the azure waters lap lazily around the shelving shore. Although wanting the brilliance and splendour of Italian scenery, it yet something resembles the Amalfi-Sorrento coast. We greatly admired many of the beautiful villas which abound in all the prettiest spots, but it was the "lotus-eating" air of the place that appealed to us most strongly, and we both decided that, when our labours were ended, it was there that we should spend the winter of our days.



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During our stay in Constantinople the papers were full of the brutalities and hardships suffered by expelled Italians. We ourselves witnessed several shiploads of them going off, and as far as it was possible to see they met with nothing but kind and generous treatment. In fact, the absence of any public feeling among the Turks against their enemies was most remarkable. Doubtless, as internal and external disorder is their normal state, another embarrassment more or less makes little difference to the common confusion.

In the great conflagration which followed Mahomed Ali's conquest, the Byzantine Library, containing the complete works of Homer and Aristotle, was destroyed. On or about its site now stands the magnificent Museum, teeming with historical and interesting objects. Rarest of all is the world-famous Sarcophagus of Alexander, discovered, along with other gems of sculpture, by a peasant in the necropolis of Sidon, not more than twelve years ago. The bas-relief portrays various episodes of Alexander's life; on one face the battle of Issus, on another a tiger hunt, and so on. Savants say that this work represents the zenith of Greek Art, and indeed even to the eyes of the clod and Philistine it is marvellous. The vividness, movement, supple

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ease or tense despair, the expressions of passion, fear and anguish of the contending warriors, and the exquisite symmetry of the figures is startlingly impressive. The scene is alive. You feel that it has only stopped for a moment while you look, and will go on again the instant you turn your back.

Taft went often to see it, and little short of brute force was needed to get him away, so powerful was the spell it cast over him.

## CHAPTER XVI

### TO BUDA PESTH

**O**N account of the alarmingly low state of the exchequer, the next part of the Expedition was remarkable rather for the rapidity of march than for business done. Taft was guiltily conscious that he had been loitering too long, whereas with me it was very certain that if I did not get home soon I never should at all ; that I should probably end my days tramping about the Balkan Peninsula in grim and sober earnest.

Under these distressing circumstances, Percy decided that we should take ship to Constanza without delay, and thence make for the Danube via Bucharest. He was most enthusiastic about the ship which he so thoughtfully selected for us —always spoke of it as the “Bateau de luxe” and never tired of describing its perfection. It and a sister boat constituted the Royal Roumanian Mail, which plies between Constanza and Alexandria. and it seemed we were very

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fortunate to fit in with it, as they only ran once a fortnight.

So our regret at leaving Constantinople was somewhat softened by pleasurable anticipation as we boarded the *bateau de luxe*. The boat, indeed, was good, very good, but the refinement of the people who owned and controlled it had not yet reached the same high standard. For instance, the first sight that greeted our eyes was the dripping carcass of a sheep being hurried along the first-class deck *en route* to the kitchen. There must have been other, less public, ways to that necessary department, for "the ship was built in England, in England," where the utmost pains are taken to conceal the offensive side of things ; where so much depends on appearances.

Taft had shown decided signs of mutiny when it was gently suggested that he should travel second class. He declared he didn't mind by land, but he'd see me and everything else doubly condemned before he'd do it by sea. Taft is ten years older than I, so out of respect to his aged bones I did not press the point, and we were again separated at meals.

After taking an affectionate farewell of Percy, we went down to have a look at our cabins. In mine, beside myself, were a honeymoon couple and a middle-aged spinster. When I found out

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that there was no mistake at all about it, I took the bridegroom—a young Belgian—aside and half-apologetically confessed a prejudice to this arrangement. I was rejoiced to find that he had an even stronger one, and we went off to tackle the purser forthwith. That official was quite impatient of our ridiculous fastidiousness. "The journey was only fourteen hours," he said; but we insisted, with the result that we spent a hideous night on the saloon table.

But that is looking ahead. As soon as the cabin business had been thus unsatisfactorily settled, Taft and I foregathered again on the after deck, waiting for our good ship to start. It did so at full speed, in a series of leaps and bounds, to the imminent peril of the surrounding lesser craft—it had, of course, to keep up its reputation as the *bateau de luxe*.

The Bosphorus charmed us greatly. Very narrow, in parts no wider than a fair-sized river, it is enclosed, like the Hellespont, by low round rolling hills covered with rich dark verdure, cool and fresh. The smooth summits of the hills are sometimes crowned with romantic old castles, generally in ruins, but more often by modern *châteaux*; and innumerable villas extend along the water's edge on either side. As one proceeds towards the further end, the

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houses become gradually fewer and fewer, till near the entrance they cease altogether and give place to sinister grass-grown forts. Passing them at a racing pace—no mines this time—we were soon well out on the sea that for some unfathomable reason is called "Black"—for its waves, like those of the Red Sea, rival the Mediterranean in their blueness. The number of sailing vessels upon it seemed quite strange to me, as nowadays the wind-jammer is an increasing rarity on the high seas and practically obsolete in Far Eastern waters.

In spite of the fact that it was as calm as a mill-pond, one poor lady was sick unto death. She suffered from that peculiar nervous *mal de mer*, not at all uncommon even on glassy lakes, which in its effects is more distressing than the natural malady and, as the cause exists only in the imagination, is far more difficult to deal with. Whether she lived or died I do not know—but she was so ugly that it didn't really matter.

After dinner I discovered Taft in the midst of a zone of intense excitement. A ferrety-faced shrimp of a youth, gibbering like an ape, was turning over the pages of a time-table with the tumult of a whirlwind, while Taft and another young man, supporting each other, peered over his shoulder with strained, anxious faces. Catch-

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ing sight of me, Taft beckoned feverishly, introduced me to his supporter and, after a moment's pregnant silence, whispered hoarsely: "There ain't a boat on the Danube to connect with this! We're sure in the wet." Indeed it seemed as if it was so, for the bearer of these ill-tidings, the shrimp-like youth, was by profession one of Cook's assistants, and although going home for his holiday, could not shake off the spell of the time-table.

But after all the only result of these stupendous tidings was that we should have to spend a night at Bucharest or Orsova, and go on by the boat on the following day, so while the wordy storm raged around I kept silence, thereby acquiring in their minds a reputation for bovine apathy and dulness which I fear I never quite succeeded in dispelling. The fact was that all this excitement about so trivial an affair, in men who had travelled much, and to whom a day here or there was a matter of no moment, puzzled me greatly. Also, in spite of the expert authority of the man from Cook's, I had a shadowy sort of conviction that there was bound to be a connection with this vaunted *bateau de luxe*—if not, no amount of eloquence on our part could make one. Moreover, it is a maxim of the wise ones that truly great minds turn all circumstances to

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profit, and here would be an opportunity of proving our claim to that title.

At last Taft and I decided to push on in exactly the same way as we had intended before the shocking revelation, and if it turned out to be true, we should just have to spend the night in some hotel or waiting-room—no very great hardship, after all. His supporter, too, firmly attached himself to us, announcing that he would do whatever we did, that our path was his path, our fortune his fortune—a declaration of confidence and devotion that didn't please us as much as it should have done. He and Taft had become drawn together at dinner by the fact that they alone of the whole table were the only two who did not use the knife as a conveyance of food to the mouth. "All the rest," said Taft, "were sword-swallowers."

We were to reach Constanza at four o'clock in the morning, so everybody turned in early, including the luckless bridegroom and myself, on our comfortless couch upon the saloon table. We had not been groaning there very long before a hazy figure loomed up the companion through the dimness, sighing mournfully. My comrade in misfortune asked him what was the matter. "Les microbes," he moaned, indicating great red lumps on his arms and neck, flamingly visible in



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that indistinct light. He passed on and took possession of another table. Presently a second figure came up from the limbo, then another and another, till there was soon a steady stream of refugees, all telling the same heartrending story of persecution in their berths below.

So there are worse places than a saloon table after all.

I for one was not sorry to bid adieu to the *bateau de luxe*, and Taft, having fared far from well over on his side also, stepped on the shore of Roumania with a sprightliness very creditable for that hour of the morning.

Constanza is much like other sea-ports of importance the world over; the only unusual thing about it being the immense number of oil steamers and oil trucks which crowd the docks and rails. The "Customs," too, are rather more pernicious and irritating than in most civilised places; and while the examination is going on, dark, dirty-complexioned little soldiers guard the barrier with fixed bayonets. From their evil appearance we had not the least doubt that they would use their horrid weapons on the very slightest provocation, and it was with relief that we passed unscathed behind, and clambered up into the train.

Glad as I was to find that these countries of

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romance ending in "a" had a real existence outside Zenda, Marsovia, Cadonia—in short, off the stage of "comic opera"—I was nevertheless a little disappointed in seeing them as they actually are, out of the windows of our speeding train. We saw no glittering palaces, no Merry Widows, no Flavias, no Ruperts, no Gipsy Loves—only vast stretches of golden grain, and sometimes splendid woods, mellowed, dark and stately like those of England, giving promise of infinite delights to the sportsman's eye; while on the land there laboured a poor and patient people about whom there was nothing particularly distinctive, except the garment that they wore—a long white smock, bound in at, and kilted below, the waist.

Roumania is essentially an agricultural country. Three-quarters of its population depend on the growth of cereals for their existence, and, consequently, the towns are rare and insignificant.

Taft's non-sword-swallowing acquaintance gave up the privilege of travelling in greater state for the pleasure of our company during those seven hours to Bucharest. In fact, he subsequently came with us as far as Buda Pesth, and though towards the end he got rather on Taft's nerves, he entertained me enormously, for

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he was something quite unique in my experience. He was short, well-built, well-dressed, with a wholesome, ruddy countenance and a thick cropped moustache. He looked like a healthy, out-of-door young Englishman of about twenty-eight or thirty, whereas in reality he was an exceptionally childish Frenchman of twenty-five. He told us with great pride that he was an opium eater and an opium smoker, and he gleefully described his orgies in that line among the purlieus of Constantinople. But his glowing cheek and bright, clear eye were not those of the opium eater, and gave the lie to his blood-curdling narrations. That was the extraordinary thing about him. At twenty one is a bitter cynic; at twenty-four one is still young enough to fancy one's self very old and wise; but at twenty-five a man should have attained to some degree of sense and stability. Yet here was this amazing youth, blessed with that mature measure of the years, laboriously posing as being addicted to a most degrading vice. Perhaps he knew instinctively, or perhaps some woman had told him, that it is only after we have struggled against, failed and still gone on struggling against, a vice that we can sound the utmost depths of good within us, that we begin to know the meaning of sympathy and

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human kindness; and having had the singular misfortune to be born without one, he was earnestly striving to repair nature's omission. But whatever the reason, he never ceased trying to impress on us what a thoroughly wicked and depraved person he was. He told us his name several times, but we didn't like it, and so, partly in deference to his pretended vice, and partly for the sake of euphony, we called him de Quincey, which highly delighted him when he learned the peculiarity of the illustrious man whose name thus suggested itself for him.

We arrived at Bucharest well after midday in a starving condition, not having been able to get anything to eat all day, and promptly set to work on lunch in the station refreshment room with the ravenousness of wild animals. Our good friend the head waiter speedily set our minds at rest concerning the agitated question of the Danube boat. There was one all right, which we could catch by taking the evening express that night to Orsova. This suited us admirably, since it would give us five hours to wander around the town and confirm the uninviting reports we had all, at one time or another, heard of it.

In addition to the usual travellers, this refreshment room was largely patronised by

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Roumanian military officers of all corps and ranks. At the next table to ours an exceedingly merry party was going on, consisting of a number of hussars, with a jolly, smooth-faced boy for host, and their joyous laughter mingled pleasantly with the constant popping of corks and the seething whisper of the golden wine. They were fine, aristocratic looking fellows, those light-hearted soldiers, but their white summer coats and caps would have been none the worse for going a little more often to the wash; and their soiled condition dispelled the beginnings of an illusion that one was getting into comic-opera-land after all.

We had some difficulty in getting away from the station, firstly because, when our meal had reached its logical conclusion, the depraved de Quincey, suddenly displaying a very real vice, began anew with unimpaired vigour on an enormous dish of sickly, assorted pastry; and, secondly, it was not easy to settle the bill, since they would not take our money. "All gold marches," they said, "but no extraneous silver." And we were naturally reluctant to change our good gold for the doubtful currency of a country in which we were only going to remain for a few hours.

However, the affair eventually arranged

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itself, and we sallied forth to inspect the capital. At first our progress was slow, for de Quincey darted into every confectioner's shop we passed and absorbed quantities of ices and lemonade, till at last we had forcibly to restrain our sweet-eating, opium-smoking bravado from the over-indulgence of his horrid appetite.

The language completely baffled us until we discovered its secret, and then, having got the hang of it, it was quite simple. You take any of the principal European languages, say German or Italian, and just add the termination "ul" to every word, and you are understood at once.

About Bucharest I have nothing to say. It is almost civilised, and walking down its principal streets one might equally well be in any other of the meaner cities of Europe. One thing, however, was very noticeable; the affection of these people for their well-beloved Carmen Sylva, whose image, in an endless variety of attitudes and costumes, looks out from innumerable frames and post cards in almost every shop window.

Our stay was short, but even if the state of my finances had permitted it, I should not have cared to stop there any longer than those few hours.

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Soon after sunset we took the express for Orsova. It was crowded. Trains on that part of the Continent always are, for it either never occurs to the authorities that the service is not adequate to the demand, or else they obstinately refuse to make it so. Squashed and harassed, Taft and I were commiserating ourselves on the prospect of a dirty night, when the conductor, scenting booty in his opulent aspect, whispered to Taft that he had a coupé up his sleeve which we might have to ourselves for a small consideration. This excellent system universally and openly prevails in many countries. I have even been told in ticket offices, when unable to get a sleeping berth, "Just give the conductor five francs and he'll lock you into an empty compartment." Thanks therefore to this system, we obtained ample room and comfort, but as Taft has not the ineffable gift of sleeping in any place other than a bed, we passed the dark hours chattering, or, to be accurate, I in listening, he in telling me about America and the part he hoped one day to play in it.

We never dared to leave our illicit compartment during the whole of the journey, lest it should have been discovered and invaded by the sardine-like multitude which had overflowed the other carriages and choked the corridor.

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Consequently, on arrival at Orsova an hour or so before dawn, we were not only extremely tired, but also filthily dirty and unshorn.

Orsova, on the left bank of the Danube, is the frontier town of Hungary. We were therefore again subjected to a searching examination of our belongings and passports—and as those two articles of mine did not seem to correspond, it looked for some time as if I was going to be held up, going to languish in some lonely fortress for the rest of my days ; and I am quite certain it was only the undoubted respectability of my two companions that saved me from that miserable fate.

As far as one could see in the dim light of the scanty, flickering oil-lamps, the station contained nothing but policemen. They wore glazed bowler hats decked with a drooping plume of cock's feathers, and each noble breast was adorned by three medals, attached thereto by a gaudy coloured strip of tin, folded triangularly in imitation of ribbon—a very wise economy, since when that latter flimsy material would have had to have been renewed, this metal arrangement only needed breathing on and a rub over with the elbow.

At last these highly decorated officials let me through, and, shivering with cold, we took



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possession of a two-horse carriage. When all was ready to start, we found that de Quincey was missing. We guessed at once that he was eating candy in the refreshment room, and as I absolutely refused to re-enter the lions' den from which I had so hardly escaped, Taft, shivering and cursing, went back in search of him. A few minutes later they returned together, Taft unusually silent and de Quincey with sticky hands and munching mouth. Then we piled into the carriage and drove off down to the river through a long avenue of cypresses, stern and dark in the violet light.

Our boat lay lifeless at the Quai. A pretty boat was she, long, white and graceful, and her name, being interpreted into the English tongue, was the "Elizabeth Catherine." On this occasion we were all first-class, since there was no second, and so the expedition marched on board with its entire force concentrated, gladly anticipating baths and nourishment. But our spirits, not very high to start with, sank lower and lower as we searched in vain for any living thing. Once we came upon an old lady asleep in the far end of the saloon, and we might have murdered her at our leisure for all the response to her terrified shrieks for help. At last, just as we were beginning to despair we espied a

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gnarled foot projecting from under the dining-room table. Unmistakably it was the foot of an elderly serving man, so we lay hold, and with a hearty heave, pulled out the very surliest old bear of a waiter, to whom we eagerly confided our hopes and fears of cabins, washing and eating. But he was entirely unsympathetic to our wretched plight. His day, he said, began at seven o'clock when the ship started; then he would be at our service—till then he would thank us to respect the liberty of a free-born subject. With those cruel words, he crawled back into his lair, growling horribly, and left us to wander hopelessly through the deserts of despair.

It was only twenty to five. We couldn't find anywhere to sleep with comfort, so we feebly dragged ourselves up on deck to watch the sun rise, a sorry spectacle at the best of times and one happily unknown to most of the leisured classes. The first ghastly rays of dawn, illuminating our faces, disclosed a piteous and abject sight. Taft, more frail and bent than ever, stood hunched up with his hands deep in his pockets, his face begrimed and thickly bearded, his eyes inflamed and his teeth loudly chattering. I also shivered violently—for my wardrobe was inadequate to the chilly hour—and

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I was clearly given to understand that my appearance was no less repulsive. De Quincey, who had slept during the night and who was well provided with overcoats and woolly waistcoats in addition to the liberal covering of blubber that nature had deposited on him, was disposed to be cheerful.

"Why," he said, "I've often been up five or six nights running on manoeuvres without a wink of sleep—this is nothing to it!"

"Buck up, Taft," I cried, catching the martial spirit. "The Sun of Austerlitz!"

"B-bb-but I'm here for p-p-pleasure," faltered Taft, in a voice broken with misery and emotion. No answer could be found to that, and we waited in mute dejection for the boat to start and the stir of awakening life.

At the end of several eternities, we did put out into the river and began steadily to paddle our way up stream. We were then able to procure breakfast, but, incredible though it must sound, we couldn't get a wash, for there was no bath on board, only a large general lavatory, whose water apparatus happened to be out of order. We might, it is true, have taken a cabin each, but the excess charge was beyond our means, so there was nothing for it but just to keep on getting dirtier and dirtier with the best

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grace possible. We found out later that for the use of the majority who travelled by night and did not care to pay for cabins was a long dormitory, divided off into cubicles; each cubicle containing a pair of upper and lower berths—a truly friendly sort of arrangement.

Besides ourselves there were only a few tourists and a couple of military officers on board, though occasionally some one got on or off at the stopping-places on either bank.

To our right, that is, on the left bank—for we were going up stream—lay Hungary, and to our left Servia, a country chiefly renowned for atrocities and the vagaries of its now deposed Crown Prince. Its calm and peaceful shore, however, presented an aspect not at all in keeping with its sanguinary reputation.

Personally I had expected much more of the celebrated Blue Danube. On starting, we almost at once passed the "Iron Gates," a rocky gorge engraved with a Latin inscription by some early Caesar. After that the river is less than a quarter of a mile wide. Rocky mountains rise sheer on either side to a considerable height, and from them sometimes naked, craggy projections overhang the water's edge; till one marvels how the stream ever managed to cut its way through obstacles so hard and flinty. The austere slopes

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are thickly carpeted with dark green woods, with here and there an infrequent glimpse of the lighter green of pastures.

The scene has a grave and stately, almost sombre, beauty, but it is without life and lacks that indefinable essence of joyous colouring that lends so rare a charm to the Italian lakes. During the first stage of our journey, we saw no other craft upon the river, or human beings upon the shore; it was like a deserted land. Taft remarked, "It looks as if we're making the first voyage up this darned river, for dammit, there ain't no signs of life anywhere around." But we were unfortunate in our season, for the atmosphere was dull and cloudy and the spirit of the river was troubled, her face swollen and sallow with the rage of recent rains; and these faithful mountains gloomed in silent sympathy. The captain told us a few days of sunshine would bring about a glorious transformation scene.

As the hours passed, the mountains gradually receded from the river, making room for broad flats on either side, spread with fields and occasional hamlets. The river too grew wider and wider, as it had not yet to concentrate its powers for the forcing of the mountains which we had lately left behind us: and the villages at

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which we stopped became larger and more frequent. It amused us to watch the people on the landing stages, even as it amused them to watch us, for which purpose they had obviously congregated there. We tried, too, to make out the weird Servian writing on the buildings and notice boards, but without any glimmerings of success; we could find no key to the cipher at all, for the letters, though of the ordinary Roman type, were often, for no apparent reason, upside down or backwards. So we soon abandoned the unequal contest and listened instead to de Quincey's endless recitals of the hearts he had broken, the lurid parts he had played in the shadier scenes of life and his marvellous prowess at all manly sports. "Interesting, if true," grunted Taft, who hated having to keep silent so long and was in no way tickled by our companion's naïve conceit.

Towards the middle of the afternoon, we were defeated by the drowsy, languorous heat, and descended *en masse* to the dormitory for an hour or two's healing rest. This essay was not an unqualified success either, since de Quincey's thunderous snoring from a distant bunk right at the far end—beyond the range of boots—kept us awake the whole time. Afterwards, when we formally impeached him, he indignantly

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denied the charge, protesting that he had profitably passed those hours in solving a chess problem.

Evening on the river was delightfully quiet and peaceful. The saloon windows were only a few inches above the surface of the stream, and in the lingering, softly-fading light, it was pleasant to dine almost on a level with the water, and to watch the kaleidoscopic panorama through the window, with the soothing plash and ripple of the current in one's ears.

Before nightfall, we passed on the Servian side the grey stone walls of Semendria, which so long and stubbornly repelled the tide of Turkish invasion. Then we saw nothing more till after ten o'clock, when, coming round a bend in the river, we suddenly beheld a dark, sloping velvet bed, gleaming with a myriad golden fire flowers. It was our destination, Belgrade.

The state of slovenliness and filth which we had now reached is quite indescribable. For two days and nights we had neither shaved nor properly washed. I was therefore in favour of going at once to a hotel and spending the night in Belgrade, but our camp was again divided on the question, for de Quincey, who had been there before, assured us that it was even worse

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than Bucharest, and that the hotels were barbarous and fearfully expensive; he, for his part, strongly advised going on to Buda Pesth by the night train. Taft was indifferent one way or the other, and put the casting vote up to me. De Quincey's insistence on the expensiveness of Belgrade hotels forced my hand, as he knew it must in the then condition of my finances, so we drove straight to the station over uneven cobbled roads, and I had no opportunity of being disappointed or otherwise in the capital of Servia.

At the station, further difficulties awaited us. The only night train, due in a few minutes' time, was the Oriental Express, composed entirely of wagons-lits. As Taft and I had second-class tickets, the difference was heavy, but in addition there was a surcharge of twenty francs for the privilege of travelling at all on that exclusive train. We were just deciding to stop the night in Belgrade after all, when the man in the ticket-office got a wire to say there were no empty sleeping-berths, and on the strength of this intelligence assured us we might travel in the restaurant car for the difference of fare only, without having to pay the excess fee of twenty francs. That was settled; the train roared in, and we clambered on board. The



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car was nearly full of unfortunates who had not been able to get berths. They stared in horror at the bedraggled intruders, as we looked about for a resting place. Finally, Taft and I found a lounge at one end, while de Quincey secured a chair on the other side in a line with us. Every other space was occupied; even the floor was teeming with a host of children, fretfully tossing about on improvised beds. On all the seats sprawled men trying to sleep in every phase of contortion, each one with a handkerchief tucked carefully around his neck in a prudent endeavour to save his collar from the perils and dangers of the night.

The air was thick with smoke, and so hot that all the windows had to be left open; and through them poured a hail of smuts and coal-dust. Cool and conspicuously clean among the welter, was one calm, tall Englishman, the sight of whom made me at the same time proud of my race and miserably conscious of my own loathsomely dishevelled condition, and tattered suit case. For few philosophies stand the test of actual experience.

Soon after starting, de Quincey—explaining that he was going to change his shirt for one which, though less clean than the one he proposed to don in the morning, was yet cleaner

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than that he was then wearing—departed to the lavatory for the purpose.

Painfully cramped, and wearied out after many long days and sleepless nights, Taft and I sat in dejected silence, for speech would have been futile and inaudible, as a Hungarian nobleman at the next table was supping off a huge bowl of curds and sugar. When at last the revolting orgie was over, Taft, indicating de Quincey's belongings with a sideways jerk of the thumb, growled—

“We must shake him.”

I protested hotly against such discourteous usage of one who had afforded us much amusement. I pointed out, too, that such a course would not only be unfriendly and illegal, but positively dangerous, as de Quincey had often told us that among his other numerous accomplishments he was a formidable boxer.

But my heat was unnecessary; I had merely misunderstood the idiom of the American language. Taft had no intention whatever of offering bodily violence to our companion, but simply wished to be rid of him, for he had got on his nerves to an unbearable extent.

At this stage the controversy was interrupted by a demand for our tickets. The conductor politely requested that, in accordance with a

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certain regulation which he showed us, we would pay the excess fare of twenty francs.

"Hell, I guess we're stung!" groaned Taft. He guessed right, we were—more deeply than I cared to admit; for the question of my daily bread was becoming acutely problematical. De Quincey, all unconscious of the conspiracy against his sacred person, returned, beaming, in the shirt that had once been clean, just in time to contribute his twenty francs to our succubus. His beam vanished with them.

The problem of "shaking" him solved itself, for he broke it to us that he could not stop in Buda Pesth, as he felt he ought to get back to Paris without delay; there was only his father to carry on the business in his absence and he feared it must be going to the dogs. Then he gave me an elaborate series of addresses—varying with the seasons of the year—where I was to find him in passing through, and send him opium, hakshish and other horrors from India. He ended by telling me of a great hotel owned by his uncle, who would be delighted to let me live there as long as I liked for nothing. He himself would see to it. This he impressively repeated over and over again, till at last I gratefully bade him good-night and tried to sleep. The idea of a hotel where one could live for nothing struck me

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as so irresistibly comic that I couldn't get it out of my mind. A Utopian dream. As I fitfully dozed, the voice of the wheels took up the strain, "There one lives for nothing," and hammered it through my head all night, now low and monotonous, now in a sudden startling roar. Once I heard the sound of a heated argument and roused myself to see what it was all about. De Quincey had all his opium smoking paraphernalia out on the table in front of him, but the horrified attendant, refusing to countenance such diabolical nigromancy, was sternly forbidding him to practice it. At length de Quincey sullenly submitted, and the lights were turned down.

Again I tried to sleep, and after fearful contortions managed to get into a position of some temporary comfort, with my legs tied up in knots, one arm on the edge of the lounge and my head resting on the arm. Some time later I awoke with that arm perfectly dead. I groped after it with the other and, laboriously lifting it, dropped it over the edge. The gradual reflow of blood caused me excruciating agony. During this torturing process, I became at loss to account for one leg. As soon as the arm had recovered its functions I started an anxious search, found it at last, raised it off the other leg and let it go. It fell with a dull heavy thud on Taft's foot ; but

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that must have been in the same condition, for he never stirred. After that I knew no more till the grey dawn found us in Buda Pesth.

Taft presented a spectacle indescribably haggard and pitiable. Bent almost double, he looked as if any minute he might snap across the middle. His face was blacker than those of his grandfather's slaves, his features indistinguishable, while his bloodshot eyes blazed out from deep beneath the grime and soot, like rubies in a setting of jet.

The train carried de Quincey onward, with my assurances of sending him lots of opium, as well as the promise of going to his philanthropic uncle's hotel—which, alas, I never kept.

Taft pleaded to go to the best hotel in the town, protesting he couldn't bear any more hardships and even offering to pay my expenses. He was evidently *in extremis*. My heart smote me at his piteous condition—at least, that was how I put it to my conscience—so I wired on the spot to a long-suffering banker for the sinews of war; and there finally ended all element of discomfort in our travels; for the future they were made in every luxury.

We drove off through the still sleeping town to the "Bristol," expectantly anticipating the delights of civilisation. Greatest of these were

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our baths, in which of necessity we spent most of the morning. As I had been conscious of a vague uneasiness ever since we had left the Bateau de Luxe, I half feared to find many tiny corpses floating toes upwards on the surface of the soapsuds. But there were none—a fact which would have pleased me much had I not a haunting suspicion that their attachment was too great to be thus lightly broken off.

Buda Pesth is a great place—a truly great place. It wears an air of real, reckless, rollicking abandon and *joie de vivre* which must at once appeal to the better nature. It seems always to be smiling and glad to see you. And the town itself compares with Paris in the magnificence and dignity of its buildings, as well as in the noble breadth and spaces of the streets and promenades.

These Hungarians, who know so well how to laugh, are a horse-loving people too; one sees splendid thoroughbreds on every side, and even the hackney carriage animals are of a very high standard, and looked after to the extent of often having their forelegs bandaged. This is a mark of care I have never seen in any other city among the horses of that class.

We passed some very happy days there on the bank of our old friend the Danube, who

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wears a far brighter aspect than in her country seat, where we first made her acquaintance; perhaps it was grief at leaving Buda Pesth further and further behind that had then so overclouded her mien.

The more we saw of the gay city the more we liked it. These merry people carry their lightheartedness and unconventionality even into the sphere of politics. One day we witnessed a tremendous commotion outside the Chamber, and on inquiring the cause were informed that one of the members, by way of signifying his disapproval of some Bill, had shot the Prime Minister during the debate. It seems to me that we have much to learn from Hungary.

In the evenings all the fashionable society, laughing and gay, promenaded the Quai opposite our hotel, obviously intent on enjoying itself.

Most of the women were unusually pretty, and all of them beautifully dressed. Many sporting priests walked in the variegated throng, wearing bowler hats, and smart frock coats over their cassocks, while an infinite variety of military uniforms struck deep and brilliant notes of colour in this scene, so gladdening to the eye; and the jingle of spurs and clatter of swords sounded pleasingly above the hum of talk and laughter.

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But the clothes of the men were very far from reaching the same superb standard as the costumes of their consorts. There was even a suggestion of amateur theatricals about the gay uniforms of the soldiers. They were in a way well fitting, but their swords were merely play-things, light and trumpery, and their medals thin and tawdry, so different from our thick heavy ones, well won in war. The whole turn-out of these young swells, both civil and military, lacked that solidity of finish so characteristic of things British.

Talking of medals, I remarked to Taft on the extraordinary number of them which blazoned every martial breast. None even of the very youngest subalterns were without one or two, and I wondered where they got them from, since, as far as I could remember, they had had no war since '66—and that was scarcely one that they would wish to commemorate. Taft thought for a moment and replied—

“Maybe they're hereditary.”

As everybody knows, the Hungarians are renowned for their musical talent. The “Hungarian Band” is no mere figure of speech, no mere metaphorical term, but a very real and accomplished institution which flourishes there nightly in almost every café. Their peculiarity



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is the cymbals—not the clashing, brazen targets that we call by that name, but a gamut of parallel melodious metal strips athwart a pair of thin wooden supports. The notes are struck with a kind of drumstick. With this one exception, the bands are composed of stringed instruments.

Every night found us listening to some one of these, and Taft, who posed as a judge of bands, pronounced them “fi-ine!” while even my untutored and ungifted ear told me that I was hearing something far superior to the ordinary music of that type.

Taft’s architectural instincts cost me many corns, for he would leave no building of importance unvisited. One day we wandered over to Buda, across the river, to see the famous Palais Royal, where sometimes dwells the most aged and energetic of European sovereigns. From the lofty eminence of its grounds the view was grand and the air exhilarating. In highest spirits I turned my gaze from the panorama below and looked with envious eyes upon the palace itself, wishing longingly that it was mine. Then I became aware that the purple veins were standing out on Taft’s forehead, and his lips twitching convulsively. He was in a paroxysm of rage. “Gee, the opportunity that gink had!

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And see what he's made of it!" he hissed. After some further furious spluttering, I learned he was referring to the architect of my precious palace. Apparently that person had not done well. Indeed, it had struck me as very stately and impressive, but of course I was wrong. Gradually, and against my will, Taft convinced me of the horror of it—the insignificance of the main entrance, the eclipsing of the central dome by the wings, statuary overdone, nowhere for the eye to rest, and so on and so on till I felt dreadfully ashamed of my previous admiration. Blessed are the unmusical and the unartistic, for they are spared much anguish.

That same morning we found a deserted and alluring cloister, in whose shade we seated ourselves to look at a fine equestrian statue of St. Etienne, which stood in the quadrangle. While we were thus innocently occupied, a crocodile of boys and girls, ranging in age from about ten to seventeen, filed in without a sound. The weirdness of their silence gave us a queer chill of horror. We looked up and saw that they were making signs, mouthing and mowing at each other. They were deaf and dumb.

Absurd though it sounds, this nightmare pantomime, so ghastly in the stillness, threw a cloud of gloom over us, which it took many

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hours of sunshine to dispel. Even festive Buda Pesth, then, has its sadder side.

The days slipped pleasantly by, till we were compelled to face the melancholy fact that our stay had already been overlong, and at last, with deep sorrow in our hearts, we girded up our loins for departure.

## CHAPTER XVII

### TO VENICE, VIA THE DALMATIAN COAST

**M**ANY years ago I met an Austrian skipper whose home lay somewhere on the Dalmatian coast, and his passionate enthusiasm and glowing descriptions of that little-known part of the world had kindled in me the desire to visit it at the first opportunity. Moreover, the sonorous names of those seaboard cities had completely fascinated both Taft and myself. We used to chant them in harmonies—Zarra, Cattarro, Ragoosa; Ragoosa, Cattarro, Zarrra. So it was natural that we bent our steps thither in search of consolation on leaving our beloved Buda Pesth.

A night train carried us to Fiume, just in convenient time to catch the "Pannonia," a dainty little white steamer built at Newcastle-on-Tyne on the graceful lines of a private yacht. None but the prettiest boats could possibly be permitted to profane those heavenly Illyrian waters.

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We set sail under a perfect azure sky, with a refreshing breeze in our faces, and a cool, dancing sparkle over the rippling sea. At first our path was plentifully bestrewn with fishing smacks of gaily coloured sails, mostly red or yellow, and some piously stamped with the emblem of the holy cross. As the distance from their harbour widened, they grew fewer and less frequent, till at last they vanished altogether from our sight.

Then we entered a maze of diminutive islands, so small that they scarcely rose above the surface; and on each was a tiny lighthouse, such a miniature affair, looking more like a figure out of Noah's Ark than a very earnest contrivance for the preservation of precious lives.

By four o'clock we reached the first of our places, Zara. Our stay, though short, was long enough for Taft to discover a gem of architecture in the shape of its Gothic church, over which he went into the most ridiculous raptures, becoming so oblivious to time and space that he all but got marooned.

Leaving there, we skirted the shores of paradise till long after the sun had gone to rest, reaching Spalato at about nine o'clock. We were only timed to stop there fifteen minutes, a

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fact which caused Taft a double sorrow, for that town contains one of the most famous of all Roman remains ; and also he was cursed with just enough of the "globe-trotting" spirit of his race to resent bitterly having to pass a place on his pilgrimage without "doing it." It was, as it were, a bead untold.

As we approached the pier, we saw that the population was in a state of huge excitement. A kind of torchlight procession was going on, bands were playing, banners waving, people singing and cheering. We were eager to get on shore, to make the most of our quarter of an hour in finding out what the disturbance was about and seeing some of the fun—but the gangway was blocked—no one allowed to pass. This exasperating delay arose because a steerage passenger had insulted the captain, and that injured dignitary, two policemen and the malefactor were hotly arguing the question at the top of their voices in the entrance of the gangway, thereby closing all traffic till the offender was persuaded to see the enormity of his crime and go along quietly with the guardians of the peace.

Meanwhile the shouting crowd was surging down towards the pier, so that when at last we were permitted to land we found ourselves right

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in the thick of it. A perceptible tenseness in the atmosphere warned us that this was no loyal display—that the crowd was a bad and wicked one, up to no good. Moreover, a number of armed military pickets posted about the square confirmed this impression. We did not know their language, but the crowd was obviously under a restraint, a fast dissolving restraint, whose bonds they momentarily threatened to break. Suddenly a daring spirit shouted the beginning of an inflammatory song, then stopped abruptly amid an uneasy silence. Some one laughed hoarsely. He began the song again. Two or three others joined in, and again they stopped fearfully, this time amid yells of encouragement. Then a band blared out, and as one man the whole mass burst into the song to the stirring strains of the Marseillaise.

Taft, recognising the air, began to bellow as lustily as any of them, but I had caught the words "Serbie" and "Hercegovina" and knew very well that though the melody was the Marseillaise the words were something very different, and so with commendable promptitude and vigour I winded him with my elbow. This violent measure was instantly justified, for no sooner had Taft doubled up in his agony than there was a furious onrush of the pickets and

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police, who savagely scattered the concourse and haled off some of the smaller members to custody.

Five minutes later we were thankful to be safely on our "Pannonia," heading out to sea again. We never discovered the true significance of that drama, for the politics of those polygenously-peopled states are far too involved for the understanding of ordinary man.

A pale young Englishman on the "Pannonia" limpetly attached himself to us for the whole of that trip. He was a specimen of a type I had often read of but never met before. Apparently of ample means, he was effeminate and sentimental to a degree and aspired yearningly to literary renown. Beyond that one ambition he seemed to have no other aim in life. At first we found him rather entertaining, till he took to reading us his impassioned effusions; then his society became painful in the extreme. I am sure that he detested travelling, and only did so for the sake of writing about it afterwards, for he regarded the various incidents of life as so many pegs upon which to hang long festoons of flowery words—and not words as merely the means of depicting life. Consequently, although God had given him two good eyes, he saw nothing in clear proportions, in its real perspective. He looked instead on a distorted



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world through the blurry and ill-focussed glasses of literature.

While he read to us, we longed, but could not find the courage, to tell him that each of his sentences was like a steeple-chase course; that it is the simple, homely word which goes straight to the heart, and that no real people ever talked like his people. And now, if this claimed to be "writing"—which happily it does not—I have perhaps laid myself open to the charge of "Physician, heal thyself!" But I am more than ever glad that we did not do him that most brutal of all kindnesses; for since I have been labouring at this, I hope, bread-winning effort, their candid criticisms have permanently estranged me from nearly all my family and friends, although I myself had no illusions to start with. There is one kindly old uncle whom I regularly look up once a week to borrow a trifle in anticipation of its huge success, and he implores me with tearful earnestness: "Don't count on it, my boy; for God's *sake* don't count on it."

In good time the next morning we entered, through a tiny strait, the landlocked bay of Gravosa. No words can paint the charm and beauty of that glorious coast. A little further along, upon a promontory, peeping out from a

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cloak of gorgeous foliage, we could discern the grey old battlements that named the duchy carved by Marmont's hero sword.

Gravosa is practically nothing more than the harbour and some barracks. We dallied not there, but set off on foot to Ragusa, stopping often on the way to admire the superb scenery. A two-mile trudge brought us to the stone gates of the city, through which we passed to the main thoroughfare. We had foolishly believed that this particular portion of the globe was as yet undiscovered by the tourist, hence it was a painful shock to find every single shop window bristling with picture post-cards, photos and knick-knacks of the souvenir sort.

The medley in the streets was very interesting. All manner of costume was there, from the Albanian kilt and tasselled pork-pie cap, through the various modes of Balkan dress, to the fez and baggy knickers of the Turk.

Taft's first care was to buy some picture post-cards of Spalato—that place which a cruel fate denied his ever seeing, as we should pass it at midnight on the return journey.

He found in Ragusa an unexpected Eldorado of architectural treasures, chiefest of them being a monastic cloister of exquisite delicacy, which likewise appealed to me, as I was able to sit

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beneath its shroud while my energetic companion roamed around examining the details of its structure. It was indeed pleasant idling there, with a vista of blue sea and sky through the arched entrance, while the moving strains of Pagliacci flowed out on the balmy air through the window of an adjacent chamber.

At the end of a few hours, having explored the little city from end to end, we adjourned to the principal hotel for lunch. At that season there were naturally no tourists, but the crude methods and appointments of the hotel restored our previous opinion that they are, at the best of times, rare—in spite of the circumstantial evidence of cards and souvenirs. Besides ourselves in the far from spotless dining-room, was only a honeymoon couple, whose barefaced amorous antics completely put us off our feed. So absorbed were they in themselves, that they were either oblivious of our presence or else indifferent to it. Taft waxed nasty and cynical about them, but yet I fancied I detected in his eyes the hungry envy of one who had tasted all the bitterness of love without any of its mildest fruits.

The boat went on to Cattaro, but we had elected to spend the whole day at Ragusa instead of dividing it between the two, for there was no object in going on to the former place unless we

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should have had time to visit Cetinje from it—which we should not.

And now, at the end of lunch and our explorations, we had several hours on our hands till the ship put in again on her homeward way ; so we quietly strolled back to Gravosa and enjoyed a delightful bathe in the pellucid depths of the harbour. Afterwards we wandered off towards the barracks and, reclining in the grass beneath the grateful shade of giant trees, languidly watched the men at strenuous drill out in the sunshine.

Presently a machine gun party came quite close to us, headed by a young officer leading a pony, upon the care and treatment of which he lectured to his men, giving practical demonstrations of handling, grooming, etc., the while. Fortunately for the efficiency of their army, his men paid not the slightest attention to anything he said or did.

Just before darkness we sailed again on our "Pannonia," free this time from the literary persecutions of our sentimental friend, as he was remaining a week at Cetinje.

We retired early to bed and I slept the dreamless sleep of the righteous, until the distant, confused sounds of coming into dock broke vaguely on my senses. Next I was conscious of

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a near, unsubtle presence, and lifting my heavy eyelids with an effort, I made out through the dimness the indistinct shape of Taft in a dressing gown. "Hullo, what's up?" I asked, drowsily. "Just going to mail these postals of Spalato—they'll think I've been here then," he replied. Quaint is American nature.

The Expedition was drawing to a close now, for Taft's holiday was nearly over and I was wearying of trains and cabins and my two khaki shirts.

The next night was a glorious one. We sat long on the deck with the great palpitating heart of the sea about us and the homeless night wind sighing sadly through the cordage. For the first time during our acquaintance Taft unexpectedly evinced an unwonted interest in my affairs and future. From his conversations in the past weeks, I had gathered the general impression that Americans have the poorest opinion of our intelligence; and they believe—because we do not think our own little affairs of enough interest to talk about to strangers, and because we do not ordinarily say quite all that is in our hearts—they believe us hopelessly dull and destitute of ideas. But as the recipient of these terrible revelations, I not unnaturally flattered myself that I was deemed an exception

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to them ; hence, what followed came as a most unpleasant surprise. Taft suddenly asked me what I should be doing in twenty years' time ! I thought for a bit and tried to put him off with a flippant reply, for I knew he wouldn't understand. But he insisted on a serious answer.

"It's a long way off," I said, "but if I'm lucky enough to pass certain exams. at certain intervals, I shall be doing pretty much the same as I am now—if not, well then, less."

He sat still while his indignation visibly bubbled up and overflowed. Then he gripped me by the shoulder, shook me and shouted in my ear—"Why don't you wake up, man ? Why don't you do something ? Why don't you have some ideas, some opinions of your own ? You go mooning around, takin' no interest in anythin' and bein' bored and blasé with everythin'—Why, you're more'n half dead !—For God's sake pull yourself together and make a start !" This was indeed a shock. That wasn't at all the light that I was accustomed to see myself in ; in fact, I had always pictured myself in very different and far more heroic colours. Because I had not mentioned it, it never occurred to him that I might be proud of the sword I sometimes wear—and I was at loss to answer his indictment, so I dissembled. There is a verse of the human old

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Tentmaker that exactly met the case, but I groped after it in vain. I strove, too, to recall one of those numerous metaphors about the smooth silent tide of Destiny, which only makes things more unpleasant for those idiots who try to swim against it. But eventually I could only answer lamely and apologetically—

“Well, old chap, the line of least resistance, you know.”

Taft rose and fumed off to bed, genuinely distressed about me, and with, I fear, a lower opinion than ever of the English.

Reaching Fiume at about noon, we put in some quiet hours there till the departure of our evening boat for Venice. This sole sea-port of Hungary is a bright, cheery little place, with wide squares, broad shaded walks and lots of breathing space. In the afternoon we walked out a mile or so, past the great naval academy to the public gardens. These appear to be wholly dedicated to the little ones—a veritable children's paradise. We roamed over its woodland paths, resting now and then on the rustic seats, and soon in some mysterious manner we would be surrounded by troops of laughing, romping gnomes and elfins; merry little people who seemed to spring up out of the very earth around about us. No grown-ups were to be

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seen ; it is a marvel how we ever managed to get into this sylvan demesne of babyhood.

After dining in the great Piazza among numbers of strutting, ruddy-faced middies and subs, we boarded the little ship that was to bear us onward, and as our arrival in Venice would be early, turned in almost at once.

We were up betimes to pay our homage from afar to the Queen of the Seas. The morning was calm and still. It was all like a painted scene as we stole over the glassy water, with a fairy city of domes and spires rising in the distance through a belt of sombre green—shimmering, vague, ephemeral in the morning mists.

A cable awaited Taft demanding his presence at home as soon as possible on urgent affairs of business. We breakfasted among the pigeons, then, entering a gently gliding gondola, sped swiftly over the open drains to the station, just in time to catch the train for Genoa. We hurriedly "told each other good-bye," and a moment later it carried away the companion of many pleasant hours, leaving me strangely lonely on the platform.

I sat down to think things over. I was now on deeply trodden paths—paths that my own feet had often helped to tread. Should I go on roaming over them again alone, or should I



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strike straight for home? I had in all been travelling less than ninety days, but those days had been full and long. When the past has been monotonous, all the days the same, they telescope, and have no existence in time. But when the memory is a storehouse and the plains of the past thickly studded with monuments, then the days have been full and long. So it was with me; each one had shown me new faces, new places and new things. Each hour was a day, each day a week.

I felt that I had been a wanderer upon the face of the earth from the beginning of all time, and now it seemed that of all things most to be preferred was an abiding-place, a bed of some permanency.

And so, pausing one night only at Verona, the Expedition made for Home, a little more broad-minded, a little more tolerant, a little more human than when it had started, and with its initial conviction greatly strengthened, that there is no people like one's own people, no land like the land where the yew-tree grows.



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